

THE GHOST WORLD

ITS REALITIES
APPARITIONS & SPOOKS

BY
J. W. WICKWAR

MEMBER OF THE BRITISH SCIENCE GUILD ;
ASSOCIATE OF THE LONDON FOLK-LORE SOCIETY

AUTHOR OF
"DREAMS WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY MEAN"
(THIRD EDITION)

CONTRIBUTOR TO DR. RAM NARAYAN'S TREATISE
ON INDIAN DREAM PHILOSOPHY ETC.

*"New times demand new measures and new men ;
The world advances, and in time outgrows
The laws that in our father's day were best ;
And, doubtless, after us, some purer scheme
Will be shaped out by wiser men than we,
Made wiser by the steady growth of Truth."*

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

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DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF
A BRAVE SOLDIER
WHOSE BODY RESTS
OUT FLANDERS-WAY
UNDER THE SHADOW OF
A SMALL WOODEN CROSS

FOREWORD

THIS book on "GHOSTS," like its companion, "DREAMS," aims at being different from any other book on the subject. The accomplishment of the task has only been made possible by the writer having had placed for his perusal literature, letters, and manuscript of an original and hitherto private nature. In its compilation much pretentious jargon of the well-known "*ghost-story*" type has been cast aside, and not a little of that which has been included is accessible to the general reading public for the first time.

THE GHOST WORLD

CHAPTER I

“What an enormous ‘Camera Obscura’ magnifier is tradition! How a thing grows in the human memory, in the human imagination, when all that lies in the human heart is there to encourage it.”—CARLYLE.

NEVER, perhaps, in the history of this old world of ours has ghost-craft had such a ripping time as during the last few years. One would have thought that with the spread of knowledge among the masses ghosts would ere this have been reduced to rational elements, but it is not so; old beliefs die hard, and none are harder in the dying than those concerning ghosts.

If you were to ask me whether or not I believe in ghosts my reply would be, “Yes, certainly! but it is not, probably, the same kind of ghostly belief as yours.” I do not know how many kinds of ghosts there are, have been, or ever will be; but for argument’s sake I will suppose that there are three.

Number One is a very real ghost; as ghosts go. It is the ghost of our ancestors which displays so surprising an amount of agility in each one of us, and shows itself in all our actions—past, present, and to come. It is the impulsive force—*the will to do*—which is behind almost our every action, be its motive good, bad, or indifferent. If you do not believe it, ask yourself *why* it is that at times you are prompted to do such weird and foolish things when, if you had

only done something in accordance with what you believe to be your true character and inclination, you would have had less reason, perhaps, for remorse in your contemplative moments. If you say it is due to native "cussedness" well and good, but say! where has that native cussedness come from? Is it something you have picked up, casually as it were, or is it something—with an inclination for hiding itself—which is born in you, inherited from the past?

Number Two ghost, which is a combination of illusion and hallucination, is also a very real ghost in so far as it is believed to be seen by the person whose mind creates and holds it.

Number Three is that good old sport of a ghost sometimes called "Spooks," and needing no introduction. He is a most whimsical and interesting old fellow, of whom a great deal has been written one way or another;—with some of his antics we will concern ourselves later on.

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From time to time ghosts of every description have been caught in the act of displaying themselves in situations which have been perplexing to the policemen—official and otherwise—who have "seen" them. They have been arrested, as well as they could be arrested, considering their elusiveness, and they have taken a sort of trial, but, unfortunately, the jury has been "packed" and the verdict prejudiced. The evidence "for" and "against" which worthy witnesses *could* have given has not been called for, but rather wilfully ignored, if it has not been wholly forgotten.

Of late, consequent upon mental disturbance caused by war-worry, spiritualistic frivolities and Welsh mediums, ghostly visitants have been

almost as plentiful as daisies in the springtime, popping up here, there, and everywhere. They have not only been "*seen*," but, if reports are believable, they have been "*felt*" and "*smelt*." Consequently the mind disposed to "fathom things out" asks: "In the name of conscience, what are they?"

This book, to some extent, shall be their court of inquiry. They shall be arraigned once more: those witnesses of the past whose evidence and testimony is now resting in many a book-case shall be subpoenaed afresh, and we ourselves shall play the double part of judge and jury.

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In the psychological history of man there is probably no more interesting question than that which relates to ghosts and apparitions. To see what no other eye beholds, to hear sounds which no other ear perceives, and to be convinced of the reality of the existence of those things which are often regarded, by the educated and the uneducated alike, with incredulity, is a subject for examination which, though perplexing, is full of interest.

① The existence of ghosts has been recorded in the annals of every nation. They have been said to appear in the lives of many illustrious persons and have been believed in from the remotest ages. The progress of science has undoubtedly diminished the people's belief in them to some extent, but not altogether. At all epochs, in every clime, under all forms of government, and with every variety of religion, there has been a deep-rooted belief in ghosts, spirits, and apparitions.

To a vast number of men and women of to-day it seems astonishing that such opinions should ever have obtained such an anchorage upon the mind, and

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one is tempted to ask whether man be a compound of errors or the sport of illusions. Upon investigation, however, one feels convinced that these beliefs, in the great majority of instances, are founded upon hallucination, error, or fraud.

We are here reminded of the naval officer who, whilst holding a responsible position in the Channel, turned his telescope into a hobby-horse. One day, whilst making observations, he imagined that at the same time he was making remarkable discoveries in the sun. It was the time of Napoleon's abdication, and the officer declared most solemnly that the Emperor's figure could be distinctly seen in heaven's mighty orb. The day following the figure again appeared, but reduced to a skeleton. On the third day the figure had vanished, but in its place there appeared the united colours of the allies. Records of these appearances were regularly entered in the ship's log, *and a number of the crew testified to the accuracy of their captain's observations.*

For fear the reader may remark upon the incident as being so much ancient history, it would be as well, perhaps, to couple with it the story of an event which is as up-to-date as one may wish.

On October 10, 1918, the Irish mail-boat *Leinster*, whilst on her way from a western port to Kingstown Harbour with 780 persons on board—men, women, and children—was most foully torpedoed, blown up, and sunk by a German submarine; of the 780 souls aboard only 193 reached land alive, and many of these eventually succumbed to their sufferings.

For many days afterwards mutilated remains of the victims floated with the flotsam and jetsam towards the Irish coast: as if, even in death, their poor broken bodies were drawn *Homewards* by some power uninterpreted or misunderstood. During all this

sorrowful time there was much watching and waiting in Irish homesteads and on the coast—a watching and a waiting oft in vain, without a ray of hope and with little consolation, until at last, either from actual natural causes, tired mind, or imagination, there were persistent rumours concerning a bright light and the sign of the cross being observed in the sky, out at sea, above the engulfing waves which were rolling over the place of tragedy.

From a newspaper, eight days afterwards, the following is abstracted—

CROSS IN THE SKY.

STRANGE SIGN OVER SCENE OF LEINSTER DISASTER.

A remarkable statement is made by the Rector of Christ Church, Kingstown.

“On Saturday afternoon last (he says) there was a bank of cloud on the horizon, and against a clear sky above it there appeared for some moments the form of a great white cross of absolutely perfect shape.

“It was seen by at least four members of my own household, not all of them together or from the same place, as well as by other people.

“One of the witnesses who described it to me said that it seemed to him at first as if there were a great cloud figure with outstretched arms which assumed the form of a cross, and as the sharpness of its outlines passed it seemed to be full of the faces of men and women. It was just, as it were, over the place where the disaster to the *Leinster* had happened.”

The reverend gentleman adds: “One presumes to offer no explanation, but it was certainly there, and at the least it was a symbol of surpassing comfort.”

The phenomenon to which the Rector refers was

seen by many residents on the Dublin coast, and has been a subject of general conversation in the city.

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“ We love better to believe than to examine,” says Bacon, and this might aptly be applied to our concern for ghosts ; we seem to be predisposed to pay attention and listen with eagerness to the tales told of them, and the more the tale-teller recoils from what we perhaps, after all, are inclined to believe to be the creations of a wild imagination, the better we like it. In our contemplative moments we realise that *imagination*, the most subtle of our faculties, is perpetually endeavouring to break away from those ties which bind it to reason ; and when it has succeeded in this, there are no fables, no ghost stories, strange beliefs, or singular illusions that it will not adopt and propagate.

Although many of our present-day beliefs hark back to the time of the Flood—and perhaps earlier still—by far the greater number of them have their origin in that fantastic period known as the Middle Ages. Our forefathers looked upon all nature with a leaning to superstition. There was not a village but had a ghost or a haunted house belonging to it ; the churchyards were full of spirits which came out of the graves at dusk and roamed about until cock-crow ; every heath or village green had its circle of fairies whose footsteps could be traced in fairy rings of dark green grass, and there was scarce a shepherd who had not seen “ the real thing.”

A herdsman living at this period of ghosts, spirits, phantoms, demons, angels, and devils had only to return from the bleak hillside on a moonlight winter's night to the comparative comfort of his cottage, and relate in an awestruck and impressive manner to his

wife and children that he had seen a spirit, discovered "a ghost's egg," or "a witches' meeting-place," and the foundation of another belief was well and truly laid. The telling of the tale would strike dumb terror into the souls of the wife and bairns and they would be deeply impressed by the memory of it as they retired to rest. The fear might pass away, but the belief would remain like a limpet on a rock. In their sleep the dream would bring the scene realistically before them, and on waking they would naturally tell of what they had "seen," to which imagination would add its quota and then their previous opinions would be confirmed.

No wonder, as the poet Gay wrote, there were those

" . . . Tales of vulgar sprites,
Which frightened boys relate on winter nights ;
How simple milkmaids met the fairy train,
How headless horses dragged the clinking chain,
And night-roaming ghosts by saucer eyeballs known,
Were the common spectres of each county town."

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When errors are once told they are repeated, as was that of the passing of the Russians through England in the early days of the Great War ; by easy stages they evolve into superstitions and beliefs which show themselves later on when the actual events in which they had their origin have been forgotten. Under the dominion of superstition there are no ideas so extravagant but that they may become deep-rooted, and this is not surprising when one reflects how, since earliest times, apparitions have been shaped by superstition and ignorance to which, in a later age, was added the additional error of scriptural doctrines wrongly interpreted. To the fauns, pans, and satyrs of antiquity there have been enlisted the fabulous

dragons, werwolves, witches, flying serpents, ogres, vampires, spooks, spunkies, fairies, brownies, giants, kelpies, dead-lights, and elf-candles of a later age, to say nothing of the hellish fears of religious fanatics who have filled an otherwise beautiful world with devils and imps of every imaginable description.

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Cassianus of old, giving an account of the ancient monks, tells how "at the beginning of their monkish life they were assaulted by midnight spirits. The raging of these spirits was so great that but few of these too good men of the age were able to endure the life. Such fierceness did they encounter that where eight or ten had been together in a monastery, they could never all sleep at the same time, but would take it by turns so that some could watch and exercise themselves—and frighten away the spirits—by singing psalms, in praying, and in reading aloud."

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To this day the Ashanti natives, when rising from a stool upon which they have been seated, will most carefully lay it on its side, and if you were to inquire the reason you would be told in a stage whisper that it was "to prevent any departed spirit, which might be hovering around, from sitting on it."

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Just recently, when rummaging over some old books, I came across an ancient volume with the following long-winded dream of a title: "An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions. Being an Account of What They Are and What They Are Not; Whence They Come and Whence They Come Not, as also How We May Distinguish Between the

Apparitions of Good and Evil Spirits and How We Ought to Behave to Them." It bears the date of 1727 on its title-page, and having read it in the small hours of the morning, alone, under a flickering gas-jet, with guns booming defiantly at German-raiding-Gothas, I have almost been persuaded to believe in the existence of ghosts to a most alarming degree.

Most of the narratives in that book are extremely weird and creepy, and however much they may be discredited by the reader of to-day, it would be folly to ignore them altogether, for there is no doubt but that similar superstitions to those expressed there have played a most important part in their transit through the ages, in forming many of the mysterious ideas concerning ghosts and phantoms which are the beliefs of to-day.

The writer of the old book, whoever he was—for it bears no name—quaintly remarks, and methinks with some truth, that : "Of all the mysteries of the invisible world, there is no one thing about which more has been said and less understood than this of Apparition : opinion is divided so much between the appearance of good and the Apparition of bad Spirits that our thoughts are strangely confused about it.

"We make a great deal of Difficulty to resolve whether there are any such things as Apparitions or no ; and some People are for reducing them all to Fancy, Whimsie, and the Vapours ; and so shutting the Door against Apparitions in general, they resolve to receive no Visits from the invisible World, nor to have any Acquaintance with its Inhabitants 'till they arrive there. Not satisfied with that, they resolve for us all, as well as for themselves, and will have it, that because they have no Notion of it themselves, therefore there is really no such thing.

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“ I believe we form as many Apparitions in our Fancies as we see really with our Eyes, and a great many more ; nay, our Imaginations sometimes are very diligent to embark the Eyes (and the Ears too) in the Delusion, and persuade us to believe we see Spectres and Appearances, and hear Noises and Voices when indeed, neither the *Devil* or any other Spirit, good or bad, *has troubled themselves about us*. But it does not follow from thence that therefore there are no such Things in Nature, or that there is no Intercourse or Communications between the World of Spirits and the World we live in, or that the Inhabitants of the invisible Spaces, be those where you please, have no converse with us, and that they never take the Liberty to stop down upon this Globe, or to visit their Friends here ; and in short, that they have nothing to do with or say to us, or we with or to them.

“ The Spirit as we conceive of it is an unrestrained, unlimited Being, governed by the laws of the invisible State and moving without being prescribed or limited by Space ; it can come and not be seen, go and not be perceived in the going ; 'tis not to be shut in by Doors or shut out by Bolts and Bars, in a Word, it is unconfined by all those Methods which we confine our Actions by, or by which we understand ourselves to be limited and prescribed.”

The book then goes on to give particulars concerning ghostly visitants which, although somewhat analogous to those ghost stories with which we are all familiar, are, nevertheless, of an astoundingly whimsical character. We will, however, pass them by, reluctantly, and endeavour to bring to bear upon the subject of ghosts the expressed thought of those numerous writers who in comparatively recent years have either added to the gaiety of nations with their

wit, or have illumined the world of literature with their art.

The idea of the existence of ghosts has, like dreams, in all ages been the cause of much perplexing thought, and from it there has emanated a deal of mental speculation which has provided a tremendous amount of complicated evidence. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who thought, perhaps, more than any other man on this subject, said that if we "define a vulgar ghost with reference to all that is called ghostlike, it is visibility without tangibility; which is also the definition of a shadow. Therefore, a vulgar ghost and a shadow would be the same, because two different things cannot properly have the same definition. A *visible substance* without susceptibility of impact I maintain to be an absurdity. Unless there be an external substance the bodily eye *cannot* see it; therefore, in all such cases that which is supposed to be seen is, in fact, *not* seen, but is *an image of the brain*. External objects naturally produce sensation, but here, in truth, sensation produces as it were the external object."

"Ah!" you will probably say after reading these quotations; "it is all very well, but the old book referred to was current literature about two hundred years ago, and is now ancient history, as also is Coleridge, who flourished in the last century." Just so! and for a couple of hundred years we have progressed very little in our knowledge of spirits, spooks, and ghosts, nor is it to be wondered at when we consider that they belong to the realm of most complicated mental phenomena. Even to-day, in the columns of medical and scientific journals as well as in the lay press, there is a battle-royal going on as to what these things really are. All manner of ideas for their elucidation are being put forward by all manner

of people, from scientists to cranks, and from spiritualists to the most ardent apostles of materialism. The fact is, for far too long the charlatans with their mediums and crystals have been allowed to have it all their own way, and the Great War, with its air raids and casualty lists, has given to them the opportunity of their lives to impose upon the credulous, suspicious, and nervy section of the people to a most alarming degree.

There has, therefore, arisen against the charlatanism of so-called spiritualists a revolt of the general public, including professors, physicians, and parsons, but being blinded in many instances by their antagonism towards each other's beliefs, they are overlooking the guilty charlatans, and castigating instead the inoffensive spiritualists who find a certain amount of joy in holding séances of an amusingly interesting but possibly harmless character.

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“But,” you may say, “*who* does really and truly believe in ghosts and in the appearing of spirits now?” Well, who *does* believe in them . . . and who does *not* believe in them?

To show that the subject even to-day is not beneath contempt to men of learning, and that it still commands attention and is deserving of consideration, the following is quoted from the correspondence page of one of London's important medical journals: the *Medical Press*. The writer, who is a well-known physician, says: “Personally, I have been a sceptic concerning spirits, ghosts, spiritualism, etc., but a series of unaccountable incidents in my own house have caused me to ask myself if there be not something which possesses a basis of reality and fact.

"In my own house a spectre of a female has been seen on eight occasions by seven individuals during the past ten years. Only one of these persons who saw it was aware of its existence prior to seeing it. Once it was seen by two persons at the same time, though neither were cognisant of the other seeing it until they mutually related the incident to me next morning. The last but one to see it was a sober-minded, level-headed nurse, who was on night duty during the illness of one of my children. She saw it standing at her side at 3.30 a.m., and though much surprised, was neither alarmed nor perturbed. Noises occur in one room overhead in the early hours of the morning, which, by their very intensity, remove all ghostly fears and make one inclined to laugh. The bells in the house I have seen violently ring, and for a long time attributed such to the action of mice or rats, but investigation of the power required to put the bells in motion puts this explanation out of court.

"I have slept for weeks in the haunted room, but with no success, and have racked my poor brains to try and explain the phenomena. One is told by spiritualists that the spectre is an earthbound spirit, but how can a spirit make the noises like moving of furniture, or ring bells in the middle of the day? Perhaps the latter have no connection with the former, but that the spectre exists one can scarcely deny when the evidence of so many impartial observers supports it."

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Turning to my daily paper about the same period, and within a week of each other, are found the following items—

"Rhondda Valley has been much disturbed during

the week by what was supposed by the folk who live in those parts to be an apparition. As soon as darkness fell a lady in white flitted about the highways of the valley. Among women-folk alarm was so widespread that they would not venture out at night. This trepidation was not shared by the men, and it is said that when the spectral figure encountered any of them she imprinted a ghostly kiss on his cheek before vanishing. The police have taken the matter in hand."

Readers can form their own conjectures as to the reason why the men were not afraid !

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"Stories of a mysterious apparition seen in lonely places at night have caused alarm among women at Bangor. Two women, who were found in a state of terror in the street at 11 p.m., declared they had seen the stranger, and some passers-by who came up actually pursued a mysterious cloaked figure, which, however, proved more fleet of foot than they, and disappeared."

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In a daily paper with a circulation which is said to run into colossal figures there is the following notice—

HAUNTED CHAMBER TO BE OPENED

NEW THRILL FOR HAMPTON COURT VISITORS

"Hampton Court's 'Haunted Gallery' is to be thrown open to the public at the end of the month.

When the Court quitted Hampton Court in 1750, never to return, the gallery was closed, and only opened on very rare occasions for favoured

visitors. For 150 years no British Sovereign ever set foot in the historic gallery until King Edward VII. visited it in February, 1901.

The story of the ghost is as follows: After bluff King Hal had Catherine arrested and locked in her room she managed to escape by running along what is now known as 'the haunted gallery.' Her intention was to see the king (whom Dickens, by the way, describes as 'a spot of blood and grease on the page of history'), and throwing herself before him, to ask for mercy. This, however, was not to be, for upon her reaching the door of his chamber the guards seized her. In spite of her screams and terror, Henry, who was at devotions, prayed on, unmoved. On February 13th, 1542, the King's will and pleasure was expressed by having her beheaded. Since that date her ghost, dressed in white, has wandered in the dead of night along the gallery floor, and then, with many unearthly shrieks, vanishes through the fast closed door."

Much evidence similar in character to the foregoing might be given without the least trouble, and it is no wonder that people ask in amazement after reading such correspondence whether it is believable or not. If it is believable, then, with Hamlet, we might very well exclaim—

Angels and ministers of grace defend us !—
 Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damned,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,
 Be thy intents wicked, or charitable ?
 Thou comest in such a questionable shape,
 That I will talk with thee."

But *do* ghosts exist in reality—in tangible form—or do they exist only in the minds of imaginative people ? Are they fictions of imagination, or are

they facts of observation ? Whilst hoping but not expecting to prove either the one or the other, we will recall and examine as far as possible without bias some further evidence which has been written on the subject by men whose names are familiar household words.

CHAPTER II

*" 'Tis a fearful thing to be no more,
Or if it be, to wander after death ;
To walk, as spirits do, in brakes all day ;
And when the darkness comes, to glide in paths
That lead to graves ; and, in the silent vault,
Where lies your own pale shroud, to hover o'er it,
Striving to enter your forbidden corpse."*

—DRYDEN.

IT was Sir Walter Scott who pithily wrote : " The belief in the existence of spirits separated from the encumbrance and incapacities of the body is grounded on the consciousness of the divinity that speaks within us : that demonstrates to all except the few who are hardened to the celestial voice, that there is within us a portion of the divine substance which is not subject to the law of death and dissolution, but which, when the body is no longer fit for its abode, shall seek its own place as a sentinel dismissed from his post."

The abstract idea of a spirit certainly implies that it has neither substance, form, shape, voice, nor anything which can render its presence visible to human eye.

Unaided by revelation, it cannot be hoped that mere earthly reason should be able to form any rational or precise conjecture concerning the estimation of the soul when parted from the body. Yet these spirits in a state of separate existence, being admitted to exist, are not, it may be argued,

indifferent to the affairs of mortality, and perhaps not incapable of influencing them.

Pope has it that—

“ 'Tis true, 'tis certain, man, though dead, retains
Part of himself ; the immortal mind remains ;
The *form* subsists without the *body's* aid,
Aerial semblance and an empty shade.”

To the multitude the indubitable fact that so many spirits exist around and even among us seems sufficient to support the belief that they are, in certain instances at least, by some means or other able to communicate with the world of humanity. The more numerous part of mankind cannot form in their mind the idea of the spirit of deceased friends existing, without possessing or having the power to assume the appearance which their acquaintance bore during life, and do not push their researches beyond this point. This being so, who can doubt but that the imagination, favoured by circumstances, has power to summon up to the organ of sight spectres which often only exist in the mind of those by whom the apparition seems to be witnessed ?

If the vision does present itself to the mind, and if any event such as that which has impressed itself chances to occur so as to correspond with the nature and the time of the apparition, the coincidence, (though it be one which must be frequent, since our dreamy meditations usually refer to that which haunts our minds in full wakefulness, and often presage the most probable events) seems perfect, and the chain of circumstances touching the evidence may not unreasonably be considered as unquestionable.

Perhaps there is no more homely illustration of imaginative happenings than that of the famous Dick Whittington, who, after running away from the

wicked old scold of a cook, and probably filled with remorse, sits on a Highgate milestone and listens to the bells of Bowe telling him to do just the very thing which he had a mind to do—RETURN! Thus all unconsciously giving proof to the old adage, which has it that “as the fool thinketh, so the bell clinketh.”

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In the autobiography of Lord Brougham there is a ghost-story which, coming from a level-headed man such as this statesman and lawyer decidedly was, is of some interest. He there tells us that in his younger days he had a chum—kindred spirit to himself—and that of an evening they would ramble together in solitary ways, discussing and speculating on such topics as the immortality of the soul and the existence of ghosts. They even entered into a solemn understanding, probably prompted by some hilarity of feeling, that “whichever died first should make his appearance to the other.”

As the years went by these friends lost sight of each other, until one winter’s evening, when Lord Brougham, who had just partaken of a bath, turned towards a chair on which he had placed his clothes, and there, to his great surprise, seated, with a solemn countenance, was the ghost of his old friend.

The shock, his lordship recorded in his diary, was so great that he swooned—and no wonder!

It would have been interesting if his lordship had also told us how he felt when with one eye on the ghost and the other on his clothes he made frantic efforts to hide inside his shirt.

Soon after having seen this vision Lord Brougham received a letter notifying him of the death of the man whose ghost he had had for a companion of the bath!

This was a "singular coincidence," says Lord Brougham in his diary, and "yet," he adds, "when one reflects on the vast number of dreams and visions which night after night—and day by day—pass through our brains, the number of coincidences between the vision and the event are perhaps fewer and less remarkable than a fair calculation of chances would warrant us to expect."

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Another noble lord—Lord Byron—relates that a sea-captain told him that, as he slept one night in his berth on board ship, he was awakened by feeling some heavy weight upon him as he lay there. By the ship's lamp he distinguished it to be his brother, who also was in the service.

Supposing it to be an illusion of the senses, and not being a superstitious man, he closed his eyes and made an effort to sleep, but could not, for the apparition remained where he had first seen it.

Putting out his hand from the bed he touched his brother's coat, and "*it was dripping wet.*" Calling out in alarm, another officer entered the cabin and the apparition vanished.

A few months later the captain received the startling news that his brother had been drowned off India—and it was on the self-same night as the phantom had entered the cabin.

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Concerning these ghosts and apparitions, our old friend, Dr. Samuel Johnson, has made some remarks which may also be of interest, so here they are: "That the dead are seen no more I will not argue to maintain against the concurrent testimony of all ages and all nations. There are no people, ignorant or

learned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which prevails, as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth ; those that never heard of one another would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience could make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers can very little weaken the general evidence ; and some who *deny it with their tongues, confess it with their fears.*"

As if to give the stamp of truth to what Dr. Johnson said, we remember that Lord Byron's (or was it Coleridge's ?) reply to the dear old lady who asked him whether he believed in ghosts was : " No, madam, I have seen too many." But, notwithstanding this bold answer, we know from records which the illustrious Byron left behind him how "horribly superstitious" he really was. Friday to him was a day of dread, and the very mention of ghosts scared him ; true, he would laugh at the idea of their existence as though he troubled not a bit about them, but what he did really and truly think about them he expressed in the following lines—

" I merely mean to say what Johnson said,
That in the course of some six thousand years
All nations have believed that from the dead
A visitant at intervals appears.
And what is strangest upon this strange head
Is, that whatever bar the reason bears
'Gainst such belief there's something stronger still
In its behalf, let those deny who will."

Strangely enough, this same Lord Byron figured in one of the most interesting ghost-stories that was ever told in connection with literature. In a letter which he wrote to his publisher he said : " My old school and form-fellow, Peel, the Irish Secretary, told me he saw me in St. James' Street, when I was

actually in Turkey. A day or two afterwards he pointed out to his brother a person across the way, and said, 'There is the man I took for Byron'; his brother answered, 'Why, *it is* Byron, and no one else.' I was at that same time seen to write my name in the visitors' book at the Palace, when as a matter of fact I was ill of a malarial fever. *If I had died, here would have been a ghost-story!*"

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It may be of interest here to remark that Goethe positively asserted that on one occasion he saw the exact counterpart of *himself* coming towards him—to shake hands with himself, so to speak!—and, if it does nothing else, it recalls Breitmann's lines—

“ So awf’ool—so oneart’ly,
So treadful was his glare,
So unbeschreiblich gastly,
So . . . ! ”

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There is an extremely interesting ghost-story in connection with one of our nobility which was originally related by a well-known organist of Guildford, whose company was much sought after on account of his musical talent and who was a visitor at the country house of the noble lord on the eventful night.

It would seem his lordship had gone to bed and whilst asleep had dreamed that the ghost of a lady, to whom he had behaved with indiscretion, appeared to his troubled conscience and warned him that he would die at twelve o'clock on the following night. By some confusion of mind, this ghost was declared by the nobleman to bear a striking resemblance in features to *the mother* of the injured lady.

On the next day a party of friends had gathered at the house, and the noble lord, who was naturally in a state of *some* agitation, related the incident of the dream. Minute by minute and hour by hour the evening passed away, and with it departed what courage his lordship could boast of. As midnight approached he was seen to be in a painfully nervous condition, and his friends engaged him in mirth and jollity and pretended to scoff at the whole thing as being foolish. Then, drawing his attention to the clock—which they had stealthily put forward an hour—they shouted in gusto, “Hurrah! Twelve o’clock is passed; you have jockeyed the ghost!” and, having drunk each other’s health, persuaded him to retire for the night. He accordingly went upstairs, and one can imagine how he felt about it! He had not been upstairs long before the clock of the village church, which was not far off, began to chime the true hour, which was midnight. Hardly had the chimes entirely floated away when a stifled groan descended from the bedroom above, and upon the valet rushing up the stairs and entering his master’s room, he found ~~him~~ lying on the floor—dead!

Of course, there is no doubt but that the first stroke of the clock, with every successive one, brought back to the ghost-seer the memory of the vision with its dreaded associations, and this working on the distressed mind with increasing intensity changed a sense of fancied security into one of terrible expectancy, and brought about the catastrophe which proved fatal. But this is only half the story, for the sequel to it is even more remarkable still.

This ill-fated lord had an intimate friend, named Andrews, staying at the time at Dartford, in Kent. This friend said that one night he had retired to rest, and having snuffed the candle, jumped into bed and

drawn the curtains, he was getting into a comfortable condition of mind, when all of a sudden his bed-curtains were pulled on one side and there stood the ghost of his lordship *beckoning him* and otherwise imploring assistance. Upon Andrews getting out of bed the phantom disappeared—and this was at twelve of the clock on the fatal night.

At breakfast next morning at the country house of the departed nobleman news was received to the effect that the mother of “the lady in the case” had died of grief for her daughter at twelve o’clock on the previous night—at precisely the same time as the noble lord had seen the ghost.

Was it her ghost that had frightened his life out? Many people believed it was.

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How shall we account for such strange phenomena? Are they miracles, supernatural revelations, or just ordinary happenings, perceived not by everyone, but only by those who have, in addition to the generally accepted number of senses such as seeing, hearing, etc., *an additional sense or mind’s eye which is capable of seeing things spiritual in the same way as the ordinary eye perceives those things which are solid and substantial?*

Dr. Johnson on one occasion assured the audience of *literati* which usually surrounded him that his printer, Mr. Cave, of Clerkenwell Gate, had *seen* an apparition. “Pray, sir,” asked the ever inquisitive Boswell, “what did he say was the appearance?” “Why, sir,” replied Johnson, “something of a shadowy being.” Oliver Goldsmith, who was present, here remarked that the Vicar of Wakefield had assured him that he had also once seen an apparition.

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"I was in my bed, and entirely awake," wrote Agrippa d'Aubigne, grandfather of the wife of Louis XIV. in his "Memoirs," "when I heard someone enter my apartment and perceived at my bedside a woman. She was remarkably pale and her clothes rustled against the bed-curtains as she passed. Withdrawing the latter, she stooped towards me, and, giving me a kiss that was as cold as ice, vanished in a moment!"

The very next day d'Aubigne was informed that his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, had died in the night.

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Beaumont, in his "World of Spirits," tells of an interesting event which happened to the illustrious Stuart family of Sir Charles Lee. The authenticity of the story was vouched for by the then Bishop of Gloucester, who recorded the narrative as it was related to him by Sir Charles himself.

"The knight had but one daughter, to whom he was greatly attached, and especially so, as the mother had died when the child was an infant. This child was cared for by an aunt until she was now old enough to take her place in Society, and to be the wife of a noble Sir William. The wedding, however, was prevented in an extraordinary manner.

"One night she had gone to bed and, thinking she saw a light burning in the room, called her maid, and asked, 'Why has the light been left burning?' The maid replied she had left no light, neither could she at that moment see one. Then she said it was the fire, but upon the maid saying it could not be, as the fire was out, she believed it to be but a dream and composed herself again to sleep.

"About two of the clock she was again awakened and

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saw the apparition of a little woman between her curtain and her pillow, who told her she was her mother, that she was happy, and that by twelve of the clock that day she should be with her. Whereupon she knocked again for her maid, called for her clothes, dressed, went into her own private room, and came not out again until nine, bringing with her a letter addressed to her father, gave it to her aunt, telling her what had happened, and asked that as soon as she was dead it might be sent to him. The aunt thought she was suddenly fallen mad, and thereupon sent away to Chelmsford for a physician and surgeon, who both came immediately; but the physician could discern no indication of what the lady imagined or of any indisposition of her body. When the young woman had patiently let them do what they would with her, she desired that the chaplain might be called to read prayers, and when prayers were ended she took her guitar and psalm-book and sat down on a chair and played and sang so melodiously and admirably that her music-master, who was then there, praised her. And near the stroke of twelve she arose, then sat herself down in a great chair with arms, and presently fetching a strong breath or two immediately expired, and was so suddenly cold as was much wondered at by the physician and surgeon. She died in Essex, three miles from Chelmsford, and the letter was sent to Sir Charles at his house in Warwickshire, but he was so afflicted with the death of his daughter that he came not till she was buried; but when he came he caused her to be taken up and to be buried with her mother at Edmonton, as she desired in her letter."

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However much some folks may try to make them-

selves believe that the apparition which freezes them with terror has no real existence, yet they cannot rid themselves of the alarm which takes possession of them.

Sir Richard Fanshaw the Royalist, and his wife were paying a visit to some friends in Ireland who resided in an old baronial castle which was surrounded by a moat. One night after they had retired to rest Lady Fanshaw was awakened by a weird, high-pitched scream coming from someone in terror or in pain. Glancing up to the window upon which the moon was shining brightly she saw there the spectre of an Irish colleen, with pale and lovely face almost hid by an abundance of loose hair which was being blown about by the wind.

In the morning the ghost-seer related to her host all that she had seen and heard the previous night, and the apparition was accounted for in the following manner.

"A near relative of my family," said mine host, "arrived unexpectedly and very ill at the castle yesterday, and not wishing to throw a cloud over your visit I refrained from mentioning anything about it to you. Unfortunately, our relative died last night about which time you saw the ghost. The female spectre seen by you is believed to be the spectre of a woman of inferior rank but of beautiful features who was married to one of my ancestors and who was found drowned in the castle moat. Whenever a death occurs to one of the family the ghost appears with its poor cry at the window over the moat at the place where the body was taken from the waters."

This story may be discredited on account of its age, for it is a long time since the Fanshaws flourished, but we must not forget that even to-day, in Ireland,

banshees and death-omens all find a place among other popular beliefs.

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Tradition has it that many years after Oliver Goldsmith was dead the old house in which he was born fell into decay, and at length became so forlorn and dilapidated as to be haunted, and the fairies then claimed it as a suitable place for their moonlight frolics. The property in time coming into the possession of new owners, an effort was made to restore it somewhat to its past usefulness, but the fairies put up a big opposition to any such scheme. As fast as the workmen made good any damage, so the fairies pulled it all to pieces again. A battle-royal went on between fairies and workmen for some time, until a hobgoblin appeared upon the scene and proved himself to be the deciding factor. Sitting astride the roof night after night in heavy jack-boots he would amuse himself and terrify the peasantry by kicking away the tiles which had been placed in position during the day. So formidable was the antagonism towards the decorators that they in turn tired in their efforts at rebuilding and left the old house to the fairies and to ruin.

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It is a common belief also with the peasant folk of county Monaghan that their old-world cemetery of Tronagh is inhabited by an evil spirit whose appearance forebodes death; and woe betide the last loitering mourner who happens to leave an open grave where a funeral has taken place, for it is to such a one that the ghost pays particular attention. If the last mourner happens to be a young man, the ghost appears, or is said to appear, as a pretty girl, and

persuades him to meet her a month hence, sealing the promise with a kiss. This kiss proves his undoing, for no sooner does he leave the cemetery than he becomes aware that he has been in the presence of a spirit, and reviles himself for having been so foolish as to heed her endearing enticements. The kiss which seals his promise, however, seals his fate, for exactly a month afterwards to the day he is tripped up by an accidental or sudden death and is buried in the old churchyard, where the colleen's spirit is ever on the look-out for unwary and unsuspecting stragglers mourning in the gloom.

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In North Britain the apparition that is said to herald the approach of death is known as the "Bodach-Glas," or "the dark grey man." Sir Walter Scott refers to it in "Waverley" very effectively when relating the end of Fergus MacIvor. As late as 1861 there is an authenticated account of the apparition being seen by a person of note. Lord Eglinton on October 4th in that year was golfing on the links at St. Andrews; suddenly stopping in the middle of the game, he exclaimed, "I can play no more, there is the Bodach-Glas for the third time." On the night of that very day, as the noble lord was retiring to rest, he expired.

* * * * *

In connection with ghosts and their visits it was at one time popularly believed that a ghost or spirit made its appearance because it could not rest until it had returned to right a wrong, to pay back old scores, to make a discovery, or to see such and such a thing was well and truly performed.

Lord Chancellor Erskine has related how on one

occasion, when he was coming out of a bookseller's shop in Edinburgh, he was met by his father's old butler, and that he noticed how changed and shadowy he appeared to be. "Eh! old boy," he said, "what brings you here?" "To meet your Honour," he replied, "and to solicit your help in recovering a sum of money due to me from your father's steward." Being struck by his manner Lord Erskine re-entered the bookshop and bade the butler to follow. At that moment he vanished. Erskine, remembering that the butler's wife carried on a little business in Old Town, wended his way thither, and judge of his surprise when he arrived there to find the wife a widow in mourning. The butler had been dead three months, and before he died he complained that the steward had been unjust toward him.

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Bodin, in his work on "Demons," relates the following: "I have heard," he says, "of a person now living who had a spirit which always waited on him, and whom he had known for more than thirty years. Every morning, at three or four o'clock, the spirit knocked at his door, and that getting up, he would sometimes open the door, but saw no one. . . . The spirit always accompanied him, and gave him a sensible sign, such as *touching him on his right ear* if he did anything that was wrong, and on his *left ear* if he did what was right. If anyone came for the purpose of deceiving him, or to take him off his guard, then he suddenly perceived the signal on his right ear; but if he was an honest man, and intended him good, he perceived the signal on his left ear. . . . If any evil thought entered his mind, and he dwelt upon it, he soon felt the signal to desist. . . . Lastly, by a kind of inspiration, he was

able to divine the meaning of all his visions. So that, during all this time, nothing has occurred to him but what he has been warned of beforehand."

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Nor is it only to the ancients that these supernatural warnings seem to have been vouchsafed. Indeed, the writer has seen correspondence concerning a late flourishing Lancashire physician who claimed a sort of partnership with certain spiritual agents that assisted him—so he declared—in his professional duties by whispering in his ear *supernatural intelligence regarding his patients*, much after the fashion of the Athenian oracles.

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Richard Barham, the author of "Ingoldsby Legends," has related how, during the American War of Independence, an apparition appeared before the opening of a tent and said some extraordinary things. It appears that George IV. had a foster-brother named Blomberg. A son of this Blomberg was a major in the British Army serving in America. The major was away from camp foraging, and as his brother officers were awaiting his return they suddenly heard what appeared to be his well-known footsteps approaching the tent. After a minute or two the major stood in the entrance to the tent and calling one of the officers by name told him to return to England, and then to call at a house in a certain Westminster street where he would find in one of the rooms, which was minutely described, a tin box containing papers which would be of great importance to his boy, who would soon be fatherless. Dumb-founded, the officers heard all this, and through their surprise or fear they allowed the apparition to

“right about” and march away. When they recovered themselves they called the sentry, and upon interrogating him understood that *nobody had passed him, neither had he seen anyone at the tent*. Within a quarter of an hour news was brought into the camp that the foraging party had been surprised and that the major lay dead with a bullet through his head! Was it his ghost that appeared before the tent?

On the return of the regiment to England, a call was made at the house in Westminster, and the box containing valuable papers concerning property in Yorkshire was found as directed. Queen Charlotte, taking an interest in the little Blomberg, had him brought up in the royal nursery, his portrait was painted by Gainsborough, and later on he became Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral and Chaplain to King George IV.

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Subsequent to the death of Dante, it was discovered that the thirteenth canto of the “Paradiso” was nowhere to be found; great search was made for it, but in vain, and after a time, to the regret of everybody concerned, it was believed to have been destroyed, or perhaps never written at all. If tradition is to be believed, the ghost of Dante knew all about this search for the missing manuscript, for one night, as his son Pietro was sleeping, his father's ghost came to him and told him to look behind the panel under the window, in the room where he was accustomed to write when in the flesh, and there he would find the missing canto. Of course, Pietro was laughed at in the morning when he told his story, but nevertheless the panel was removed, and there, sure enough, dusty and mouse-eaten, was the missing canto.

When the Duke of Buckingham was murdered at Portsmouth by Felton there was a story told in almost every chimney-corner of how the ghost of Sir George Villiers, the father of Buckingham, who had been dead some years, had appeared with a warning to one of his old friends because *he could not rest in peace* for fear of Buckingham coming to a bad end. Indeed, the ghost, so it is recorded, paid a visit to an old friend—a Mr. Towes by name, of Windsor—as he lay in bed. Said Mr. Towes to the shade of Sir George, “Why, you are dead! Why are you here?” And the reply was, “I am dead, but cannot rest in peace for the wickedness and abomination of my son at Court, and I do appear to you to tell him of it, and to advise him to desist from his evil ways.”

“But,” said Mr. Towes, “your son, the Duke, will not believe me, he will say I am mad,” and the ghost made reply, saying, “Go to him from me and tell him by such a token (a mole that he had in some secret place, and of which no one but himself and another knows of) that I sent you.” Accordingly Mr. Towes went to Buckingham off the Thames at Lambeth and delivered the message, but Buckingham, as was expected, only “laughed at it.” Towes accordingly returned home to Windsor, and, as it was late, entered his bed, and was just going to sleep when to his astonishment and alarm the bed-curtains were drawn aside, and there stood the ghost of Buckingham’s father with a dagger, *portending* the assassination which happened at Portsmouth three months afterwards.

This ghost-story is mentioned by Lord Clarendon in his “History,” which was written about this time. He says: “The Duke had been hunting and the visitor (Towes) met him with the ghost’s message at Lambeth. The Duke, doubting the integrity of his

messenger, the token was given making mention of the mole, and the Duke changed colour and swore that he could only have come to that knowledge by the devil, for the particulars of it were known only to himself and one other person whom he was sure would never speak of it.

When the Duke arrived at his mother's mansion in Whitehall his countenance appeared full of trouble, with a mixture of anger—a countenance that was never before observed in him. For two hours he was alone with her, and at his departure she was overwhelmed with tears and in the highest agony imaginable. The chronicler adds: "Whatever there was in all this, it is a notorious truth that when the news of the Duke's murder was brought to her she seemed not in the least degree surprised, but received it as if she had foreseen it; nor did she afterwards express such a degree of sorrow as was expected from such a mother for the loss of such a son."

CHAPTER III

*“ Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And, having once turned round, walks on
And turns no more his head ;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.”*

—CHARLES LAMB.

IN the Warteburg Castle at Eisenach, where Martin Luther was imprisoned, there is a certain room which is shown to visitors as that in which Luther was studying when, one night, he was visited by no less a person than his Satanic Majesty himself. Indeed, the stone wall of the apartment is still said to bear witness to the occurrence by showing a big black stain caused by the ink of Luther's ink-pot, which was used by the great man as a hand-grenade when the apparition showed itself.

Whether Luther did really and truly see the devil or not is of course open to argument. Letters written by Luther about the time of his incarceration show him to have been in a most superstitious and gloomy frame of mind, and considering his enforced sedentary habits, with a deranged digestion following in its wake, it is not to be wondered at. Being given to thinking deep and long, this gloomy suspicion no doubt added to and revived impressions made upon him in the days of ecclesiastical conflict and persecution, and is, almost by itself, enough to explain most of his apparitions and all his nightly visions.

The brain images which we create in wakefulness of a devil personified require a deal of reason to shift them when appearing in one of those semi-unconscious half-sleeps which so strangely run into and intermingle with the alternations of waking and sleeping, and especially so would it be if we were confined in a musty cell where everything is shadowed in gloom.

If Luther did say he saw the devil, he *did* see the devil, and a refusal on our part to believe him makes no difference to the belief which was in Luther's mind. Why should he not have seen the devil, or for that matter a hundred devils, *if he had a mind to do so*?

In this respect it is of interest to recall how illusions strike on the susceptible chords of the mind and appear to jangle harshly out of tune with reason. So much so, indeed, as to influence the life and conduct of the seer to such an extent that in the world's opinion that one becomes either a sage or a lunatic.

Take Swedenborg as an example. Here is the son of a Swedish pastor who surprises a wondering world by declaring that he had daily chats with the ghosts of Luther, Moses, St. Paul, St. John, and angels too numerous to mention. Nor did his conversations end here, for the spirits of the departed great were the companions of his solitude. If Swedenborg had made these statements without believing them he would have been an impostor indeed, but all the evidence goes to prove that he did believe them, and, moreover, that he was convinced in the fullest degree of the reality of his spiritual communions.

There is on record a letter which he wrote to the Wurttemberg Prelate, Oetinger, dated November 11th, 1766, in which he says: "I conversed with St. Paul during a whole year, particularly with reference

to the text, Romans iii. 28. I have three times conversed with St. John, once with Moses, and a hundred times with Luther. With angels, finally, have I these twenty years conversed, and converse daily."

Concerning angels he says: "They have human forms, the appearance of men, as I have a thousand times seen; for I have spoken with them as a man with other men—often with several together—and I have seen nothing in the least to distinguish them from other men. Lest anyone should call this an illusion or imaginary perception, it is to be understood that I am accustomed to see them myself when perfectly wide awake, and in full exercise of my observation. The speech of an angel, or of a spirit, sounds like and as loud as that of a man; but it is not heard by the bystanders. The reason is that the speech of an angel, or a spirit, finds entrance first into a man's thoughts, and reaches his organs of hearing from within.

The angels who converse with men speak not in their own language, but in other languages which are known to a man: not in languages which he does not understand."

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An interesting historical example of the effect of what is thought to be "illusion" on human conduct is furnished by the immortal story of Joan of Arc. We see her, standing trial as a heretic, a magician and idolatress. She is condemned; and the barbarity of the age in which she lives sentences her to death by burning.

Her visions of saints and angels—be they mere productions of her own fancy or not—were undoubtedly very real to her mental sight, and her

enthusiastic and high-couraged heart shaped them into holy prophesyings which only needed a resolute will such as she possessed to bring about their realisation.

Speaking before her judges she said : “ It is now seven years ago, when on a summer day, towards the middle hour, I was about thirteen years old, and was in my father’s garden, that I heard for the first time on my right hand, towards the church, a voice, and there stood a figure in a bright radiance before my eyes. It had the appearance and look of a right good and virtuous man, bore wings, was surrounded with light on all sides, and by the angels of heaven. It was the archangel Michael. The voice to me seemed to command respect ; but I was yet a child, and was frightened at the figure, and doubted very much whether it were the archangel. I saw him and the angels as distinctly before my eyes as I now see you, my judges. The archangel announced that God had taken pity upon France, and that I must hasten to the assistance of the King.

“ At the same time he promised me that St. Catherine and St. Margaret would shortly visit me. He told me to do what they commanded. Upon this St. Catherine and St. Margaret appeared to me, as the archangel had foretold.

“ They ordered me to get ready to go to Robert de Beaudricourt, the King’s captain. He would several times refuse me, but at last would consent, and give me people who would conduct me to the King. Then should I raise the siege of Orleans. I replied to them that I was a poor child, who understood nothing about riding on horseback and making war. They said I should carry my banner with courage ; God would help me, and win back for my King his entire kingdom.

"As soon as I knew that I was to proceed on this errand I avoided as much as I could taking part in the sports and amusements of my young companions.

"So have the saints conducted me during seven years, and have given me support and assistance in all my need and labours ; and now at present no day goes by but they come to see me. I seldom see the saints that they are not surrounded with a halo of light ; they wear rich and precious crowns, as it is reasonable they should. I see them always under the same forms, and have never found in their discourse any discrepancies. I know how to distinguish one from the other, and distinguish them as well by the sound of their voices as by their salutation. They come often without my calling upon them. But when they do not come, I pray to the Lord that he will send them to me ; and never have I needed them but they visited me."

One would have thought that such courage and such a confession of faith would have saved "The Maid of Orleans" from her judges !

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Much evidence of a similar nature goes to show that there can be no doubt but that false impressions given to the brain by faulty senses such as sight and hearing are also peculiarly apt to conclude in hallucinations of a most exciting or morbid character, and that from imperfect and inaccurate hearing, especially, there may come all manner of superstitions and beliefs.

Doctor Johnson on one occasion, on opening the door of his chambers at college, was visibly impressed by hearing, as he believed, his mother's voice, calling him by his name, "just as she used to," well

knowing at the time that his mother was very many miles away.

Was Samuel Johnson in a dream—dreaming of another Samuel who heard a voice call him by name, not once but thrice, or was it a mistaken sound due to his deafness, for he was, he tells us, “very hard of hearing”?

Probably it was a like strange calling *from nowhere* which prompted Milton to write of

“The airy tongues that syllable men’s names
On shores, in desert sands, and wildernesses,”

and the same idea may have prompted Defoe to tell of how the immortal Robinson Crusoe was strangely awakened from sleep by hearing someone shouting his name, when he was alone—an unknown shipwrecked mariner—on a solitary island.

Even with the most perfect of senses it is not surprising that we should imagine we hear airy voices and phantoms, for in childhood our mothers’ maids took good care to terrify their charges with tales of bogey-men, imps and fairies—good, bad, and indifferent—and even by reminding us, on occasion, that we ourselves, however good we tried to be, were good-for-nothing-little-devils. And then there was the tale of “Jack the Giant-Killer,” and “Bluebeard,” and “Marley’s Ghost” and “Gabriel Grub,” and a host of others, all too numerous and varied to mention individually. Memories of them all, perchance, have been stored away in the deep recesses of the mind, and from their caverns at times when all is quiet they seem to come out, as it were, to have a look round and to make their presence felt—and even heard.

Robert Burns at the age of thirty-two, looking back on his childhood days, says something that might

explain the condition of mind which fears and sees apparitions. "In my infant and boyish days," he says, "I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, brownies, fairies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry; but had so strong an effect on my imagination that to this hour in my nocturnal rambles I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places, and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors." . . . "Slight, withal," as Byron wrote in "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," "may be the things that bring back to the heart the weight which it would fling aside for ever; it may be a sound, a flower, the wind, the ocean which shall wound, striking the electric chain wherewith we're darkly bound."

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As if to give the stamp of truth to the previous lines, Sir Walter Scott has left it on record that on one occasion, soon after Byron's lamented death, he was in his study at Abbotsford during the darkening twilight of an autumn evening reading a book which dealt with the habits and opinions of the poet. Suddenly laying down the book and passing into the hall, which was fantastically adorned with weapons, armour, and skins of wild animals, and upon which the beams of the moon were dwelling, he came "face to face with the exact representation of his departed friend." Stopping for a moment to notice the

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wonderful accuracy with which fancy had impressed upon the bodily eye the peculiarities of dress and posture of the illustrious poet, and being sensible of the delusion, he felt no sentiment save that of wonder at the extraordinary accuracy of the resemblance, and stepped onwards towards *the ghost*, which, as he approached, resolved itself into the materials of which it was composed—these being great-coats, plaids, shawls, and other articles as are usually found in the entrance halls of country houses !

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Surveying the past, meditating the present, and anticipating the future all help to turn the mind to dwell upon these visions of the twilight as well as to comprehend the midday fantasies. The mind, often against one's will, gets into a state of eager anxiety or excited exertion which is not unfavourable to the indulgence of what have been styled "supernatural communications from spiritual visitors." Nor does it more particularly, at times, apply to solitude and darkness, to the individuals, and to private life.

Apparitions and ghosts have been declared as visible by whole multitudes in various conditions of life ; and not only by men and women engaged in prayer and devotion in dark barns or in the mists of the mountainside, but by men—whole armies—on the field of battle, engaged in mortal conflict.

Should a common feeling of danger, fear, and enthusiasm act on the overwrought nerves of many men or women at the same time their minds would seem to become, naturally, *attuned* or *sympathetic* towards each other, and when after a fearful and terrible ordeal as was, for instance, the glorious retreat from Mons, when our little army of "Con-

temptibles" held up the German hordes, when they realised that they had escaped from what should have been, according to the rules of war, overwhelming defeat, they attributed to the miraculous their own superhuman accomplishments, and if one warrior has a vision of angels on white horses leading them out of danger, then others, catching at the idea with emulation, believe it must be so, and the idea becomes historical before the fallacy, if fallacy it be, is investigated and detected.

Scott, in "Old Mortality," records how the Scottish Covenanters in their retreat to the hillsides, where they sought refuge in gullies, ravines and caves, imagined they were pursued and harassed by myrmidons from the abode of darkness. Here in their fastnesses, concealed from human foes, they were pried upon—so they said—by no less a person than Satan himself, who came "grinning and making mouths at them."

The gloomy Covenanters, more annoyed than afraid, cuffed him soundly about the head with their dog-eared Bibles and showed such a general unkindness towards him that he was compelled to get out of their way by changing into a bundle of dried hides and rolling down the gully into turbid water.

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It might be said that *fear* exercises the same dread power over the minds of men not ordinarily given to fancy, as was the case at the battle of Majuba Hill, when brave and seasoned troops fresh from fighting victoriously in the East became panicky at the approach of a few Boer farmers, and later still, in the great World-war, when whole regiments of splendid Italian soldiery—who previously had proved their bravery—"gave way" lamentably before German

and Austrian guns, and went on retreating for many miles until British and French troops arrived to revive their courage.

The psychology of fear, indeed, is a factor to be reckoned with, and if it was linked up with ghosts and apparitions, and studied accordingly, it might explain many of those peculiar happenings of which the world at one time or another hears so much.

Butler has truly said—

“ There needs no other charm, nor conjuror,
To raise the infernal spirits up, but fear,
That makes men pull their horns in like a snail,
That’s both a prisoner to itself, and jail ;
Draws more fantastic shapes than in the grains
Of knotted wood, in some men’s brains.”

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In the Napoleonic Wars a French regiment quartered in Calabria received peremptory orders to march to the coast with all despatch and there oppose the landing of troops from the enemy’s flotilla. It was in the month of June and the regiment had to cover about forty miles. Dr. Parent, acting as surgeon to the troops, says that “ the battalion started at midnight, and did not arrive at its destination till about seven o’clock in the evening, having scarcely rested, and having suffered much from the heat. On its arrival, its rations and quarters—an old deserted abbey—were ready prepared.

“ As this battalion had come the furthest, it was the last to arrive, and consequently had the worst barracks assigned to it, eight hundred men being placed where usually only half that number would have been lodged. They were huddled together on straw placed upon the ground, and as they had no

coverings they could not undress themselves. The inhabitants had previously warned us the battalion would not be able to rest, for that spirits assembled there every night, and that already other regiments had failed in the experiment.

“ We merely laughed at their credulity ; but what was our surprise, about midnight, to hear the most frightful cries issue from all parts of the building, and to see the soldiers rushing about in the greatest alarm !

“ I questioned them as to the cause of their fear, and they all told me the devil dwelt in the abbey ; that they had seen him enter through an opening of the door of their chamber in the form of a large black dog with curly hair, who had bounded upon them, ran over their chests with the rapidity of lightning, and disappeared on the side opposite to the one at which he had entered. We ridiculed their fears, and endeavoured to satisfy them that the event depended upon simple and natural causes, and was nothing more than the result of their imagination, but we were quite unable to convince them, or to induce them to re-enter their quarters.

“ They passed the remainder of the night on the seashore and scattered about in different parts of the town. The next day I again questioned the sergeants and corporals and some of the oldest soldiers. They assured me they were not persons to give way to fear, nor did they believe in spirits or ghosts, yet they seemed to me to be perfectly convinced that the scene which had taken place in the abbey was no effect of the imagination, but a real event. According to these men, they had scarcely fallen asleep when the dog entered ; they saw him quite plainly, and were almost suffocated when he leaped upon their chests.

“ We remained the whole of that day at Tropea, and the town being full of troops we were obliged to retain the same quarters ; we could only persuade the soldiers to go to rest by promising to pass the night with them. I retired at half-past eleven with the major of the battalion ; the officers, through curiosity, were scattered about in the different rooms. We had no expectation that the scene of the preceding night would be renewed.

“ The soldiers who were reassured by the presence of their officers who kept watch, had fallen asleep, when at one o'clock in the morning from all the rooms at the same time the same cry came forth, and the men who had *felt* the dog jump on their chests, fearful of being suffocated, left their quarters, resolved not to return to them again. We were up, wide awake, and on the watch to see what would happen ; but, as may easily be supposed, nothing made its appearance.

“ The enemy's flotilla having sailed away, we returned the next day to Palmi.

“ Since the event which has just been recorded, we have traversed the kingdom of Naples at all periods of the year, our soldiers have often been crowded together in the same way, but this phenomenon has never shown itself again.”

The explanation of the foregoing strange happening seems to be that the forced march and the great heat, favoured by the uncomfortable conditions of sleeping in a crowded and badly-ventilated building, with a poisoned atmosphere, had all conspired with fear to present a dreaded apparition. The soldiers had, no doubt, heard rumours concerning spirits of men and dogs, and were predisposed to see them as soon as they began to sleep *and to dream*. *For after all is said and done, the act of dreaming is but a continuation*

of the thinking principle. In dreams, man no longer controls his thought—although he may to some extent be able to change the course and the shaping of his dreams—and the senses become in abeyance. He loses the power of identification, and believes without surprise in the most extravagant happenings both as regards persons and things. He has no power of fixing his attention; or of reasoning on what he sees in his visions. His memory, which comes into the dream and acts its heavy part along with that medley known as the association of ideas, is at once both mystical in form and extraordinary in quantity.

The acceptance of this theory might explain many of the ghost-stories, for the elucidation of which there seems to be no other explanation.

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Sir Walter Scott has reminded us that even in the field of battle, and amid the mortal tug of combat itself, strong belief has wrought a similar wonder, and those who were themselves on the verge of the world of spirits, or employed in dispatching others, have beheld the apparition of those heroes whom their national mythology associated with such scenes; and how in such moments, be they of undecided battle or amid the violence, hurry, and confusion of ideas incident to the situation, the ancients supposed that they saw their deities.

Nowhere have we a better illustration of this than in the Crusades, when kings, soldiers, and the common people were daily in the habit of witnessing apparitions of almost every description.

Take, for instance, Peter the Hèrmit, to whom belongs the glory of having delivered Jerusalem. Disgusted with the world in general, and with mankind in particular, he withdraws into one of those

austere orders of recluses where, from the effect of solitude, fasting, prayer and meditation, his imaginative mind becomes—if you like—exalted.

Possessing the fervour of an apostle and the courage of a martyr, his zeal recognises no obstacles, and all that he desires seems of easy accomplishment. Such was the extraordinary man who inaugurated the Crusades. Emerging from his obscurity, without name or fortune, and solely by prayer, lamentation, the power of eloquence, and the irresistible force of his example, he was able to excite the Western world to array itself against the East. Furthermore, the mind becoming filled with the project in view, it had no great difficulty in imagining a continual intercourse with Heaven, and to believe itself to be the receptacle of Divine wisdom and design.

A combination of religion, ignorance, love of the marvellous, and a lingering fear of the end of the world, all concurred to favour the production of apparitions.

Great events were expected, and men prepared to welcome them with an ardour proportioned to the degree in which they accorded with their way of thinking. The voice of the Hermit stirred the heart, and the contemplated delivery of the Holy Places of the East—the birthplace of a thousand marvellous tales—inflamed the imagination of the people to an extent not hitherto experienced.

Coincident with the setting-out of the first Crusade, apparitions and visions began to make their appearance. Soldier and civilian alike beheld “signs” in the heavens, and they related not only the “visions” they had seen, but the “commands” which they had received.

When the Crusaders arrived in the Holy Land, where other wonders and miracles had already been

performed, they multiplied the visions tremendously ; and, be it believed, with very little effort.

Michaud, in his " History of the Crusades," relates how the ghostly spirits of Dorylæum, St. George, and another were seen fighting in the ranks of the Crusaders.

At Antioch, a celestial group clothed in armour and led by martyrs were "seen" to descend from Heaven, and at the Siege of Jerusalem a visionary knight, appearing out of the clouds, stood on the Mount of Olives, waving his buckler and giving the sign to the Christian Army for entering the city. Before it was entered, the ghosts of Christians who had fallen during the siege appeared upon the towers and unfurled the Standard of the Cross.

No idea, however extravagant, seemed to be discredited. It was believed and testified to by the monks of Argenteuil that on the day when the great Saladin entered Jerusalem the moon came down from the sky to earth ; and then—reascended !

The faithful added to these wonders by declaring that they had seen images of the saints in the churches shedding tears of blood ; and these things were attested to, not by solitary dreamers, but by men of action and by whole hosts .

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A combination of circumstances might very well explain how hallucinations concerning ghosts and apparitions may affect a number of persons at the same time and become almost epidemic.

A broad-sheet issued by a printer of Shoe Lane in August 1664 contains an account of an apparition said to have been seen in the sky by many people at the same time over the north-east coast of England.

It was about the time that Van Tromp with his Dutch Fleet was causing some uneasiness in the minds of the people, and the apparitions were declared to have taken the shape of "two fleets engaged in close battle for over an hour with smoke and noiseless cannon rolling from them" !

In 1680, also in August, another news-sheet gave particulars concerning "a hundred ships of several bignesses and various shapes, fighting in the sky, seen by a very sober fellow, a carrier between Cirencester and the Old Sarazen's Head in Carter Lane near St. Paul's Church. His evidence was supported by five passengers who were travelling in his cart with him at the time."

A month later, "there was a naval engagement observed as being fought in the air over Monmouthshire: a fleet coming from the north gave battle to another from the south." A reverend minister and several others said they "saw a great ship fire, and after that the rest discharged their volleys in order so that there were great flashings of fire, and much smoke, and noises. Then the ships sailed away out of sight, and phantom armies appeared." The news-sheet, which was printed at the sign of the Golden Bell, then describes how a battle was fought with pistol and sword, and adds that "the cries of the wounded and dying could be distinctly heard" !!!

One may gather from the foregoing that an "inspired press" is not a novelty, and that it dates back further than "The Fall of Pekin" !

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Many other appearances of apparitions on a grand Drury Lane scale have been recorded from time to time.

In the middle of the eighteenth century a

broad-sheet, issued by a Mr. Tookey of St. Christopher's Court, described how a phantom troop of horse in close rank had been seen going over fells in Cumberland by a traveller, who had witnesses with him to prove the sight. The phantom horsemen came from one side of the mountain, in a mist, and disappeared on the other. They were observable for upwards of two hours, and twenty-six additional witnesses living in cottages within a distance of two miles attested to it before a magistrate.

In 1812 the Leeds newspaper, as well as a number of other journals, were recording how a phantom army had appeared in the sky round about Leeds. "It was four deep, covered thirty acres, and was commanded by a man in a scarlet coat."

As late as 1885 there was what might be described as an epidemic of ghost-seeing occurring in Italy. It happened in this way : A little girl named Desolina told some playmates that she had seen the spirit of a beautiful lady dressed in blue, going through a wood and up the mountain-side. This spiritual lady had spoken to her, saying that she was the Madonna, and very soon afterwards the whole of the people from the village in which the child lived were on the look-out for the ghost. A correspondent writing to the *Times* newspaper at the time said : "Although some of the folk are incredulous, the greater number do not for a moment doubt the veracity of the girl's statement. Desolina is hailed as the favourite child of the Madonna, and the whole population has gone out in procession to the spot at the entrance of the wood. There has commenced a literal epidemic of ecstasies and visions. While I write, more than thirty little girls declare that they have seen and are in direct communication with the Madonna. To these are added men and women, young and old,

married and single. For miles round this village the country has the appearance of religious festival.

“Hanging from the branches of the trees and on the hedges on all sides are offerings presented by the peasants to a miraculous shrine, which at present consists of a basket, draped with three or four cloths, on the roadside, to the right, as you proceed towards Corano. Hundreds and hundreds of persons are seen labouring up the steep ascent, under the burning rays of the July sun. Some girls scramble up the bare rocks, supplicating the Virgin with loud cries to appear, until they faint with fatigue. Recovering their senses, they say that they hear the voice of the Madonna, while all present fall on the ground, kissing the earth, with convulsive sobs and floods of tears. A profound impression is produced. To aggravate matters, hysterical women sing, laugh, and cry, causing others to imitate them.

“While I write this, thousands are thronging hither from the valleys of the old Duchies, from Piedmont, from Liguria, and from Lombardy. The number is estimated at sixteen thousand. The authorities are now interfering, and it is high time. Several doctors who have visited the place declare that the spread of this hallucination is likely to assume very alarming proportions.”

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If other instances were needed one has only to turn over the page of history. Coriolanus in one of his battles, so Plutarch states, saw Castor and Pollux mounted on white horses—more white horses!—fighting valiantly in the foremost ranks. At the battle of Platea the sky was said to have resounded with such awful cries that the Persians, alarmed and fearful of impending disaster, fled—terror-stricken.

Pliny also mentions that when the Romans were at war against the Cimri, alarming noises as of the clash of arms and sounding trumpets came from the heavens, and Whiston in his "Josephus" has recorded how, after a certain Passover, "a prodigious and incredible phenomena appeared," inasmuch as "before sun-setting chariots and troops of soldiers in their armour were seen running about among the clouds."

It may be of interest here to recall that the ancient Athenians attributed such cries to god Pan, and the word "panic" is supposed to have been derived from the event. Also it must be remembered that in the early ages, ecclesiastical writers maintained that when two nations were at war celestial spirits placed themselves on the boundaries of the two kingdoms, and engaged in desperate combats. The memory of this may explain somewhat the tendency of people to see armies fighting in the clouds.

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Among apparitions made famous, mention might be made regarding the Giant of the Brocken. At certain times a giant is said to appear at the summit of the Brocken, which is, as is well known, the loftiest of the Hartz Mountains. For many years it has been reported on by astonished travellers, and it has been the source of most marvellous tales. In recent years science and clear thinking have somewhat robbed it of its mystery, and its elucidation came about in the following manner.

A traveller not altogether unacquainted with science, desirous of investigating the phenomena, went to the Brocken just at a precise moment when the giant happened to be disporting himself upon the clouds. As the astonished but expectant visitor was

gazing at the giant a gust of wind almost carried away his hat. In raising his hand quickly to save his headgear he noticed, to his dismay, that the spectral figure mocked him, and that when he moved his body the giant did likewise. Amazed, he fetched the landlord from the inn on the mountain-side to participate in the amusement. These two men, arriving at the view-point previously noted, found now not only one giant but two. Then these two men "acted the goat," so to speak, and the giants did likewise; when they raised their arms the giants raised theirs; when they danced the giants danced in harmony, and in fact every movement of the two men was imitated by the spectres. The traveller, being of a philosophic turn of mind, thought the matter out, and was able to prove to a satisfactory degree that the apparition was nothing more than natural optical phenomena caused by the following combination of circumstances.

When the rising or the setting sun throws its rays over the Brocken and upon the body of a man standing opposite to fine light clouds, he need only to fix his eyes steadfastly upon them, and if the atmosphere is favourable he will observe the singular spectacle of his own shadow extending to the length of five or six hundred feet at a distance of about two miles.

Sir William Brewster, in his work on "Natural Magic," tells of similar phenomena occurring in Westmoreland, as well as in other mountainous districts, where armies on the march have been seen in the clouds, arising from reflected images of horses and men who happen to be *on the mountain between the sun and the clouds*.

In the Straits of Messina that separate Italy from the Island of Sicily, and when the sun, atmosphere, and clouds lend themselves to the creation of the phenomenon, there is to be seen what is popularly

known as the "Fata Morgana"—palaces, towers, fertile plains with waving trees, etc., are all to be observed in the form of a mirage set before a background of rainbow-edged clouds and tinted mists.

Of latter years, the true cause of such spectral phenomena has been pretty well explained away by science—the art of dealing with things as they are in themselves, as Ruskin says—and the explanations of these sky-apparitions may readily be found in natural and atmospheric causes when actual events taking place at a distance are *imaged and reflected* upon the clouds by a peculiar operation of the sun's rays.

The phenomena in the cloud is seen by the eye, and imagination and superstition has added the rest.

In our own day, the phenomena known as the Northern Lights, linked up with that other phenomenon known as Rumour, has been associated with and answerable for a good many strange stories, and especially so in connection with Zeppelin raids, and fires, and battles at sea—and even "a German landing" on the East Coast, to say nothing of the aforementioned passing of the Russians through England in the early days of the war!

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Among other interesting illusions, although not exactly of the same character, but showing how explanation to much that is mysterious may be found in simple causes, is that deception known to the Japanese and to the rest of the world as "The Magic Mirror": It is just a mirror made of bronze, circular in form and slightly convex, about twelve inches in diameter, with a reflecting surface polished with a mercurial amalgam. Upon the *back* of the mirror there is usually a design of birds, flowers, or mystical characters. If a screen be placed in *front* of the mirror and a bright light

thrown upon the polished bronze, a more or less perfect representation of the design on the mirror's back will be outlined upon the screen in the form of bright-lined ghost-images on a dark background.

Discovered by accident, its cause for some time baffled the inquisitive, until at last the secret was divulged. The strange manifestations arise simply from a slight inequality in the polished surface of the mirror; the thicker portions which have the pictures at the back of them being flatter than the remainder of the convex surface.

CHAPTER IV

"In order really to see things you want not only eyes but a mind bent on seeing."—SIR WALTER BESANT.

AND when ghosts "speak," how shall it be accounted for? *Do* ghosts speak, or is the voice "heard" due to a false impression received by a faulty sense of hearing; in the same way as a vision or spectre may be—as some reasonable people believe—merely a false impression received by faulty sight?

I have read somewhere of a party of men crossing over a bleak and barren part of the country; and how one of them, being afflicted with deafness, carried an ear-trumpet so that he might converse intelligently. At one moment, upon placing the instrument to his ear, he distinctly heard—or thought he heard—from a distance, the cry of a pack of hounds in full chase. Upon notifying his companions of this, they listened, but heard nothing. The deaf man being so persistent in his belief, investigation was decided upon, and the sound of the hounds was discovered to be simply the sighing of the wind in the trumpet-shaped opening of the hearing apparatus.

As children, did we not place the sea-shell to our ear and listen—"to what the wild waves were saying"?

Another story, somewhat different, but showing how happenings a little out of the ordinary may be seized upon in fear and made the foundations for all manner of superstitious beliefs, has been told by an

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old skipper: "'Twas a year or two back that it happened," he says, "in the middle watch—just after midnight—when we were on a voyage from South America. Some hands had been ordered to reef the main topsail, which of course they proceeded to do, but no sooner had they reached the cross-perch than they came slithering down as quickly as if Old Dave himself was after them.

"When asked what they meant by such conduct they all declared that the ship was haunted in a most horrible manner, and that a voice had shrieked at them the following sentence of ill omen: 'It does blow cold!'

"This simple explanation of their fearsome behaviour being somewhat inexplicable to the mate, they were once more ordered aloft, but only with the self-same result. In a rage, and with many swear words, the mate soon determined to show them how he scorned such land-lubberly and noodle ideas by going aloft and attempting to reef the topsail himself. The effort, however, did not meet exactly with the expected reward, for upon reaching the topsail the same dread voice that had affrighted the sailors affrighted him by shrieking: 'It does blow cold!'

"Returning to deck with a glum countenance and a silent tongue, he did his best to explain away, in a somewhat shuffling manner, the reason why he had not accomplished the task he set himself to do, but realising the importance of the reefing, he succeeded by sundry promises of extra grog to induce his ship-mates to make another adventurous attempt.

They did so, and this time discovered the cause of their fears and alarm to have originated in a harmless parrot, which, unbeknown to them, and so far unperceived, had taken up its quarters in the folds of the main topsail."

The probability is, one might very well argue, that the greater proportion of ghosts associated with old castles, houses with moats, and even humble dwellings, exist only in sound. A place has only to be hallowed by superstition, and imagination is not idle in doing the rest. In the still night a noise is heard—a creaking, trifling noise, and we, thinking of ghosts and perhaps at the same time spurning any idea of its supernatural origin, determine to investigate, and, if needs be, to lay the ghost.

All the inmates of the house are asleep, including the canary in its cage and the cat on the hearthrug. Cautiously we look out of the window and find it to be a starry night with hardly a breath of wind to ruffle the curtain in the casement. The search is all in vain, and a further effort is made to rest and slumber; but sure enough, there is the same noise repeating itself, only this time it appears to come from another direction: before, it was on the left and near at hand, now it is on the right and further away! Our searches are resumed, and again there is disappointment, and if the incident occurs again another night with the same result personal courage is apt to give way, a superstitious dread seizes the mind, and the existence of ghosts becomes a reality of belief.

With regard to these noises and the fear they foster, we have the evidence of no less a person than Sir David Brewster the scientist. He says: "I have had occasion to have personal knowledge of a gentleman, devoid of all superstitious feelings, and living in a house free from any gloomy associations, who heard night after night in his bedroom a singular noise, unlike any ordinary sound to which he was accustomed. He had slept in the same room for years without hearing it, and he attributed it at first to

some change of circumstances in the roof or in the walls of the room, but after the strictest examination no cause could be found for it. It occurred only once in the night, and it was heard almost every night with few interruptions. It was over in an instant, and it never took place till after the gentleman had gone to bed. It was always distinctly heard by his companion, to whose time of going to bed it had no relation. It depended on the gentleman alone, and it followed him into another apartment with another bed, on the opposite side of the house. Accustomed to such investigations, he made the most diligent and fruitless search into its cause. The consideration that the sound had a special reference to him alone operated upon his imagination, and he did not scruple to acknowledge that the recurrence of the mysterious sound produced a superstitious feeling at the moment. Many months afterwards it was found that the sound arose from the partial opening of the door of a wardrobe which was within a few feet of the gentleman's head, and which had been taken into the other apartment. This wardrobe was almost always opened before he retired to bed, and the door being a little too tight, it gradually forced itself open with a sort of dull sound, resembling the note of a drum. As the door had only started half an inch out of its place, its change of place never attracted attention. The sound, indeed, seemed to come in a different direction, and from a greater distance."

When sounds so mysterious in their origin are heard by persons predisposed to a belief in the marvellous, their influence over the mind, must indeed be powerful. An inquiry into their origin, if it is made at all, will be made more in the hope of confirming than of removing the original impression, and the unfortunate

victim of his own fears will also be the willing dupe of his own judgment.

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Another : An old baronial mansion, famous for its panelled walls and "haunted" chamber, from which on bleak and gusty nights there comes a sound of pitiful moaning as from a female in distress.

A visitor having a tolerable liking for such mysteries expresses a willingness to sleep in the particular apartment where the sound is mostly observed. Before retiring, however, he takes down from the wall an old rapier and, testing its point, lays it beside him—"in case," as he says, he "should need it."

After forcibly keeping himself awake as long as possible, he eventually falls asleep, and no sooner does he do so than he is awakened by *the sound that comes a-moaning*.

Getting up, sword in hand, he makes for that part of the room where the sound seems to be most distinct, and following it—as it were—along the wall, suddenly stops and plunges the rapier clean through the wainscoting into something hollow behind.

Further investigation proves "the unearthly noises" to have been caused by an organ pipe having been left in the wall when the mansion had undergone some reconstruction ; the wainscoting had been built over it, and when the wind got up its back it moaned, as of course it should have been expected to.

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Here we have illusions of hearing, and it may be readily believed that illusions of vision may be formed quite as easily.

Sir David Brewster has also expressed some valuable ideas concerning these things, and I am

indebted to him for several which the reader will find on this and the next page or two.

It reminds us that all things are not always what they seem, as readers may judge for themselves by placing upon a *white* surface two coloured wafers or pieces of card about the size of a sixpenny piece. Let them be three inches apart, and then look down upon them from a distance of about twelve inches, *only keep the right eye exactly above the left wafer*. Upon closing the left eye the wafer on the right will disappear from sight. If the head is moved to the right so that the left eye is over the right-hand wafer, and the right eye closed, the wafer on the left will “disappear.”

Continue the experiment in a like fashion, only vary it by using two *white* wafers on a piece of black cloth : as the eye is closed the white wafer not only disappears but a *black* one appears to have taken its place. . . . Ghosts !

Another example : If a small piece of white paper the size of a postage-stamp is placed on a *green* tablecloth, and a narrow strip of paper—also white—placed about four inches away from it, you may test the illusion. Gaze at the *little bit of paper* steadily with both eyes, or only one for preference, from a distance of about fifteen inches, and after a few seconds the strip of paper will vanish ; steadily continue the gaze and it will reappear—vanish—and reappear as long as you please.

If desiring to pursue still further the phenomenon of illusion *originating in the eye*, it may be done by placing a white tablecloth or sheet of white paper upon a table ; then cut out in various coloured papers a few small figures—say one of a man, a horse, a dog, or anything else—then place one of them, a *red* one, on the white ground. This done, gaze at it

intently for a few seconds without blinking, and its redness becomes less brilliant. Upon turning the head and glancing into a dark corner of the room you may see that same figure—only it will be *green* instead of red ! . . . More ghosts !

A yellow figure placed on the white ground gives its "ghost" in indigo blue ; violet, in yellow ; white, in black ; black, in white ; blue, in a yellowy red ; green, in reddish violet ; and so on.

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With regard to ocular deception and "ghost-seeing," there are just one or two other points of interest which might have consideration. Probably everyone has made acquaintance with that peculiar experience commonly known by the appellation "seeing stars"—usually caused by a knock on the head, nose, or "one in the eye." It is said by the knowing to have its origin in the nervous fabric constituting the retina of the eye being affected by the pressure of the blood-vessels. The reader can easily apply the test by punching himself on the nose; or by closing the eye and pressing the eyeball with the finger, or sneezing violently. A condition somewhat analogous may be caused when, in darkness, the eye strains to perceive that which is but dimly perceptible ; moreover, it is not impossible for darkness itself to have the power of compressing the retina, which in turn throws out those luminous sparklets of light. Add to this a state of indisposition, caused maybe by "liver," pain, sorrow, grief or despair, and, not forgetting the variety of distinct forms which the mind even in a state of health is capable of conjuring up when in the mood to do so, and we may with no great difficulty discover the origin of many a weird ghost-story.

It is, of course, quite believable that some eyes are more susceptible than others to the impressions, and in this respect Sir Isaac Newton has left behind a valuable record. He says on one occasion he looked for a little while at the sun—not directly, but indirectly through a looking-glass—then glancing into a dark corner to observe the impression made and the circles of colour which encompassed it, he noticed that the longer he looked into the darkness the more vivid did the spectrum appear to become.

After a while, however, the eye assumed its normal outlook, but later, upon going into the dark again, the “ghost” of the sun reappeared, and the more he fixed his mind on it the more distinct it was.

When he had first gazed at the sun through the glass he had one eye covered, and when he had first noticed the phenomenon in the dark he could see it with that same eye, but now, to his further surprise he could see the spectrum *with both*—the one had intimidated the other!

This continued for three days, so that whenever he went into a dark room, or shut his eyes, he could see it. After then the spectrum faded by degrees, and finally vanished—except that it could be recalled *at will* by looking into a dark corner or by closing the eye and applying a slight pressure to the eyeball.

From the foregoing it may readily be believed that the retina may be so powerfully influenced by external impressions as to retain the view of visible objects for some time after they have gone out of focus, as it were. By local pressure it may become so excited as to present moving spectres of coloured light, the real facts of which we know very little, and as in the case of Sir Isaac Newton, we find that *the imagination has the power of recalling the impression as long as the memory retains a recollection of it.* From

such phenomena the mind feels it to be no very violent transition to pass to those spectral illusions which have at times haunted the most intellectual people, not only in the solitude and darkness of night, but in the light of day and when surrounded by the social circle.

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With the reader's permission we will pursue this line of thought concerning the retina of the eye yet a little further, and I will emphasise my viewpoint on the subject by a parable: Not long since, a select party of *literati* had gathered together to indulge in tale-telling, much after the style of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims, and mention was made of an exceedingly clever detective who figured very prominently in a murder mystery. It happened in this wise: A murderous assault had been committed upon a young and beautiful woman of fortune, and, as usual, when the discovery was made there was a hue and cry after the perpetrator of the foul deed. Scotland Yard, as so often before and since, failed to run the rascal to earth, and the whole of London, out of sympathy for the lady, who was well known and respected, entered into the man-hunt. After every clue had fizzled out and the lady's life had almost done likewise, there appeared upon the scene a student wearing a pair of peculiarly thick-lensed spectacles with tortoiseshell rims, who for pastime was known to have combined detective-work with that of the study of science. Being allowed at the lady's bedside, he set to work to unravel the mystery by intently watching every movement of the suffering victim, who was fast settling down into that long last sleep of all.

That part of the hospital ward where the woman

lay being in semi-darkness, he took from his pocket a small candle, which, when lit, gave out a most brilliant light; this he placed so that its rays fell on the white face as it lay before him. When gently remonstrated with by the nurse for his seeming thoughtlessness, he excused himself by saying: "It is a pity, perhaps, but necessity demands it!"

A sudden flicker of the light seemed to arouse the senses of the sleeping woman, for she sat up, and, with eyes widely open, stretched forth her hands imploringly, then placing them to her throat, shuddered, and fell back—dead.

It was noticed that during this last paroxysm the student had sat unmoved, staring hard into the woman's open eyes, and, when "all was over," that he rose slowly, extinguished the candle, and went out of the ward with a look on his face which seemed to signify that he had been through a trying ordeal—and had triumphed. As he passed the house-surgeon in the doorway he was heard to say, "It's all right, I have it!"

Within a few hours, practically all the detectives in England were on the look-out for a man wearing a neckerchief under a low collar run through a ring of uncommon shape and workmanship. In a few hours more there was arrested in the Midlands an aristocrat actually wearing a ring as detailed by the amateur detective.

The student's secret was this: he knew that among the attributes of the eye it was possible for the retina to retain an image of a recent occurrence, and so, with his powerful magnifying spectacles, he takes up a position—much as a poacher would—hoping that an opportune moment would come along when the eyes of the woman would be opened wide, and that from the reflection of the candle-light he would

be able to see the picture impressed upon the tablet of the eye. When the opportunity came along he seized it, and making very good use of the knowledge which was his, and almost his alone, he gained a result which perhaps had never been excelled in the annals of criminal-hunting.

Of course, this story will be ridiculed by the faithless and the unbelieving of all things wonderful, but it serves a purpose. If the actual occurrence has not really happened, and is merely a bit of the writer's stock-in-trade, who is there among my readers so bold as to say it never will happen ?

* * * * *

Coming back to the subject of optical illusion, we are reminded of Darwin, who, speaking of the physical causes of hallucinations produced by looking at the sun, and then directing the vision to a dark part of the room, says : " I covered a paper about four inches square *with yellow* chalk and with a pen filled with a *blue* colour wrote upon the middle of it the word BANKS, in capitals ; and sitting with my back to the sun, fixed my eyes for a minute exactly on the centre of the letter N in the word. After shutting my eyes, and shading them somewhat with my hands, the colour was distinctly seen in the spectrum *in yellow colours on a blue ground* ; and then, on opening my eyes on a yellowish wall at twenty feet distance, the magnified name of BANKS appeared on the wall written *in golden characters*."

" Strange ! " you say. . . . Yes, it is. And a similar phenomenon takes place on looking fixedly at a window in a strong light and then at a dark wall. The spectral impression of the window with the curtains, sashlines, and panes of glass reappear on the wall in a most ghostly fashion.

"A friend of mine," says Abercrombie, "had been one day looking intensely at a small print of the Virgin and Child, and had sat bending over it for some time. On raising his head he was startled by perceiving at the farther end of the apartment a life-size female figure with a child in her arms. The first feeling of surprise having subsided, he instantly traced the source of the illusion, and remarked that the figure corresponded exactly with that which he had contemplated in the print."

It has also been proved by those well qualified to speak from experience that after continued mental work, where all the faculties have been concentrated on one subject, the material forms associated with it may continue visible, although the subject itself has ceased to engage their attention.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has told how, after being many hours occupied in painting, he walked out into the street, that the lamp-posts seemed to him to be trees, and the men and women moving shrubs.

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If the reader seeks a further homely illustration, that reader has only to bring before the mind's eye the familiar picture of "Jesus Christus" painted by Gabriel Max. The artist there depicts "The Man of Sorrows" crowned with thorns; the cry of anguish, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" has escaped His lips, the eyes are *closed* in [death; the head has fallen forward and rests, slightly inclined towards the heart, and blood-drops trickle down the wounded brow from the impressing thorns. "It is finished. . . ." But as the picture of the Christ, with the heavy eyelids, is intently gazed upon with the reverence which it invokes, *the eyes open—or at least appear to*

open, and return a look which is as full of compassion as anyone may wish or desire.

* * * * *

Effects still more remarkable are produced when the eye views objects that are difficult to be seen from the small degree of light with which they happen to be illuminated. The imperfect view which we obtain of such objects forces us to fix the eyes more steadily upon them ; but the more exertion we make to ascertain what they are, the greater difficulties do we often encounter to accomplish our object.

It is believable that the eye thus thrown into a state of agitation sees the object upon which it is fixed, enlarge, contract, partly disappear, and then again become visible, and so on. And the phenomenon may be most distinctly seen in the gloaming of a winter's evening, when objects in a room are illumined by the fitful flame thrown out by a piece of gassy coal. Things white jump into the vision, and things not white are only faintly visible, and to persons who are timid or superstitious they may become a source of real alarm. The eye cannot accommodate itself to see such objects distinctly, so that the forms of persons and things merge into each other and actually become more shadowy and confused.

The conditions of the eye are, we are persuaded, very frequent causes of a particular class of apparitions which are seen. The spectres or ghosts are usually white, because no other colour renders them so visible. When the eye dimly descries a gate-post, or a sign-post, a silver birch tree, or even a piece of newspaper in the dark, it fixes its attention, and the stony stare sees in it a ghost or goblin, or anything else it has a mind to, disappearing and reappearing, with varied change and shape.

Again, there is abundant evidence that hallucinations of sight accompanied by illusions of hearing may often explain away the ghost-story which baffles every other theory applied for its analysis. We might even go further, and say, paradoxical as it may seem, that the images and ghosts *seen* are often of *internal* creation, and have no existence *outside* the person's mind that creates them, inasmuch as they have been *seen by the blind* !

It is, of course, undeniable that in total blindness the hallucinations must be seated in the brain, and M. Esquirol and Lélut—two French scientists—have quoted several examples of this.

“An old man, who died at more than eighty years of age, never sat down to the table during the latter part of his life without fancying himself surrounded by a number of boon companions whom he had known fifty years previously. This octogenarian had only very feeble sight with one eye, over which also he wore a green shade. Every now and then he, like Goethe, saw the ghost of his own image in front of himself.”

Another remarkable instance of this kind of hallucination occurred in “a lady who was quite blind. She never walked out without seeing a little old woman with a red cloak and crutch, who seemed to walk before her.”

In the Asylum in the Faubourg St. Antoine there was an old lady who had been blind for many years. Every morning she had the door and windows of her apartment set wide open, to allow a number of persons to pass out who filled the room, and whose dresses and ornaments she would describe.

The question naturally arises: “How is it that the ghosts are seen by those that are blind as well as by those that have their sight? Are they simply

creations of the mind or are they not ? ” If they are, then “ the writing on the wall ” may be accounted for with some degree of reasoning.

Aretino Spinello, the Italian artist, when he painted the fallen angels, represented Lucifer with such a terrible appearance that he was frightened by his own production, and had the figure of the devil always before him when he shut his eyes ; the devil would reproach him for the hideous form which he had given him in the picture.

William Blake, the mystic poet and painter, who for some time was confined to Bedlam hospital, and who was called “ The Seer,” was thoroughly in earnest when he declared that he could converse with the spirits of Moses and the prophets, chat with the apostles and feast with Belshazzar. The mystic portals of the past were all opened to him, and the world of spirits crowded about him. On his table, ever before him, were his pencils and brushes so that he might have them ready for use at a moment’s notice.

Large volumes were full of his handiwork ; his heroes, he said, came in a continual stream and insisted upon having their portraits taken. Richard III. he believed to be one of his most constant visitors, and the monarch’s portrait had been magnificently painted in oils “ *in three sittings*,” which meant that the ghost of the dead King must have visited the artist on three different occasions.

Questions which were expected to embarrass the artist were repeatedly put, but he would answer them coherently and without hesitation.

“ Do these persons have themselves announced, or do they send in their cards ? ” he was asked. “ No, but I recognise them when they appear ; I did not expect to see Marc Antony last night, but I

knew the Roman the moment he set foot in my house." "At what hour do these illustrious dead visit you?" "At one o'clock; sometimes their visits are long, sometimes short. The day before yesterday I saw the unfortunate Job, but he would not stay more than two minutes; I had hardly time to make a sketch of him, which I afterwards engraved—but silence! Here is Richard III." "Where do you see him?" "Opposite to you, on the other side of the table: it is his fourth visit." "How do you know his name?" "*My spirit recognises him*, but I cannot tell you how." "What is he like?" "Stern, but handsome; at present I only see his profile; now I have the three-quarter face. Ah! now he turns to me; he is terrible to behold." "Could you ask him any questions?" "Certainly. What would you like me to ask him?" "If he pretends to justify the murders he committed during his life." "*Your question is already known to him*. We converse mind to mind by intuition and by magnetism. We have no need of words." "What is his Majesty's reply?" "This; only it is somewhat longer than he gave it to me, for you would not understand the language of spirits. He says, what you call murder and carnage is all nothing"!

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If further evidence is still needed to show that ghosts *are* often but freaks of memory aided by imagination, there is the story, told by Bouismont, of the painter who succeeded Sir Joshua Reynolds. He was so busily engaged upon portraiture that he painted in one year no less than three hundred portraits. The secret of his success and astonishing rapidity was that he required but one sitting, and then finished the painting with remarkable facility.

Upon being questioned as to this secret he said: "When a sitter came to me I looked at him attentively for half an hour, sketching from time to time on the canvas. I wanted no more—I put away my canvas, and took another sitter. When I wished to resume my first portrait, *I took the man and sat him in the chair, where I saw him as distinctly as if he had been before me in his own proper person*—I may almost say more vividly. I looked from time to time at the imaginary figure, then worked with my pencil, then referred to the countenance, and so on, just as I should have done had the sitter been there. *When I looked at the chair, I saw the man!* This made me very popular, and, as I always succeeded in the likeness, people were very glad to be spared the tedious sittings of other painters. I gained a great deal of money, and was very careful of it. Well for me and my children that it was so. *Gradually I began to lose the distinction between the imaginary figure and the real person, and sometimes disputed with sitters that they had been with me the day before.* At last I was sure of it, and then—and then—all is confusion—ghosts—spirits—spectres—everywhere! I recollect nothing more—I lost my senses—was thirty years in an asylum. The whole period, except the last six months of my confinement, is a dead blank in my memory, though sometimes, when people describe their visits, I have a sort of imperfect remembrance of them; but I must not dwell on these subjects."

"It is an extraordinary fact," added the recorder, "that when this artist resumed his brush, after a lapse of thirty years, he painted nearly as well as when compelled to discontinue it. His imagination was still exceedingly vivid, as was proved by a portrait I saw him execute, for he had only two sittings of half-an-hour each; the latter solely for

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the dress and for the *eyebrows*, which, strangely enough, he could not fix in his memory."

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Dr. Hibbert, a well-known scientist, has recorded how, when he was a small boy, he was sent away from home some miles that he might excel in the art of composition and letter-writing. After a few months he returned home, and, he says: "I was directed to repair to the house of one of my relatives, where my father, who was newly returned from the army, had arrived and had sent for me. He examined my specimens of writing, and, finding them good, failed not to express a suspicion of their being my own. As he was going out, therefore, one afternoon, along with the lady of the house to pay a visit in the neighbourhood, he recommended me to write ten or twelve lines in order to remove his doubts. Immediately upon my father's departure my duty prompted me to go up to the chamber that had been allotted to me, and having searched for all my writing materials, I knelt down—being then a little boy—before an arm-chair, upon which I placed my paper and ink.

"While engaged in writing I thought I heard upon the staircase people who were carrying corn up to a granary. Having, therefore, risen from the place where I was kneeling, I turned a corner of the tapestry and saw a little room open, and in this room my father seemed engaged in conversation with the lady of the house. As I had seen both one and the other get into a carriage and set out from the chateau, I was much surprised at now perceiving them before me. Terror united itself to astonishment. I let go the tapestry, and, leaving the chamber, quickly descended the staircase.

"Upon meeting with the housekeeper, she remarked

some alteration in my face, and asked what was the matter. I told her all about it. She honestly assured me that I had been dreaming, and that the marchioness and my father would not return for more than an hour. I would fain have discredited her assurance, and stood fixed near the door of her room until at length I saw them arrive. My trouble was not a little increased at the sight; for the present, however, I said nothing to my father, but when, after supper, he would have sent me to bed before him, all the self-collection which I could muster on the occasion was to allow myself to be conducted out of his presence. Yet I waited for him to accompany me into my chamber, for I was unwilling to re-enter it alone, but along with him. He was astonished therefore, upon retiring, to find that I had lingered. He asked me what was the cause of it, and, after some vain excuses, I confessed to him that I was terrified because spirits had appeared in the chamber. He derided my fear, and demanded of me to whom I was indebted for such foolish tales. I then told him my adventure, which he no sooner heard, than, intent upon undeceiving me, I was conducted by him to the granary, or, rather, to the garret to which the staircase led. It was then made known to me that this garret was not fit to be a store-room for corn—that there was actually none there, and that there never had been any. Upon my return, as I followed close to my father, he asked me to point out the place where I had lifted up the tapestry and seen the room open. *I searched for it in all directions to show him, but in vain.* I could find no other door in the four walls of our chamber than that which led from the staircase.

“Events so opposite to what I had believed could be the case alarmed me still more, and I imagined

from what I had heard related of *goblins*, that some of them had caused these illusions in order to abuse my senses. My father then insisted that such alleged freaks of spirits were mere fables—more fabulous even than those of *Æsop*, adding that the truth was I had slept while writing, that I *dreamt* during my sleep all which I now believed I had heard and seen, and that the conjoined influence of surprise and fear having acted on my imagination, had caused the same effect upon it as would have been produced by the truth itself. I had difficulty at the time to consent to his reasoning, but was obliged to acknowledge it in the end as very just. Observe, however, how strong the impression of this dream was. I think, candidly, that if the vision had not been falsified by all the circumstances which I have just noted, I should, even at this time, have received it for a truth.”

CHAPTER V

*"The . . . eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;
And as Imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation, and a name."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

PROBABLY there is nothing which illustrates so well the nature of our beliefs and consequent illusions as a consideration of them in the different conditions of sleeping and waking, and the intermediate states between dozing and profound repose ; when a condition of meditation influenced by darkness and solitude either precedes or follows sleep ; when the single idea or image takes exclusive possession of the mind and throws up all manner of visions which change and interchange with a rapidity nothing less than marvellous.

One is almost convinced that all ghost-seers, prophets, illuminati, poets and painters, are indebted to the inspiring magic of such real phenomena for all the extravagances which follow in the wake of such reveries.

Under similar conditions men of genius have conceived the greatest beauties, the poet his most effective verses, the musician his most charming melodies, the author his original plots, and, in sooth, the writer of this book many of the ideas expressed therein.

In the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" these

illusions of sleep have been most admirably described by its author, De Quincey. He says: "At night, when I lay awake in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp; friezes of never-ending stories, that to my feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were stories drawn from times before *Œdipus* or *Priam*—before *Tyre*—before *Memphis*. At the same time a corresponding change took place in my dreams; a theatre seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain, which presented nightly spectacles of more than earthly splendour, and the four following facts may be mentioned as noticeable at this time:

"That as the creative state of the eye increased, a sympathy seemed to arise between the waking and dreaming states of the brain in one point. That whatsoever I happened to call up and to trace by a voluntary act upon the darkness was very apt to transfer itself to my dreams, so that I feared to exercise this faculty; for, as *Midas* turned all things to gold that yet baffled his hopes and defrauded his human desires, so whatsoever things capable of being visually represented I did but think of in the darkness immediately shaped themselves into the phantoms of the eye; and, by a process no less inevitable, when once thus traced in faint and visionary colours, like writings in sympathetic ink, they were drawn out by the fierce chemistry of my dreams into insufferable splendour that fretted my heart.

"For this, and all other changes in my dreams, were accompanied by deep-seated anxiety and gloomy melancholy, such as are wholly incommunicable by words. I seemed every night to descend not metaphorically, but literally to descend, into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever

reascend. Nor did I by waking feel that I *had* reascended.

“The sense of space and, in the end, the sense of time, were both powerfully affected. Buildings, landscapes, etc., were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time; I sometimes seemed to have lived for seventy or a hundred years in one night—nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium passed in that time, or, however, of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience.

“The minutest incidents of childhood, or forgotten scenes of later years, were often revived. I could not be said to recollect them, for if I had been told of them when waking I should not have been able to acknowledge them as parts of my past experience.

“But, placed as they were before me in dreams, like intuitions, and clothed in all their evanescent circumstances and accompanying feelings, I *recognised* them instantaneously. I was once told by a near relative of mine that, having in her childhood fallen into a river, and being on the very verge of death but for the kindly assistance which reached her, she saw in a moment her whole life, in its minutest incidents, arrayed before her simultaneously as in a mirror; and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and every part. This, from some opium experiences of mine, I can believe. I have, indeed, seen the same thing asserted twice in modern books, and accompanied by a remark which I am convinced is true, viz., that the dread book of account which the Scriptures speak of is, in fact, the mind itself of each individual.

“With a power of endless growth and self-reproduction, architecture entered into my dreams, and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. To my architectural, succeeded dreams of lakes and silvery expanses of water. The waters changed their character; from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change which, unfolding itself slowly like a scroll, through many months promised an abiding torment; and, in fact, it never left me until the winding up of my case. Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. *Upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear, the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces upturned to the heavens—faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries; my agitation was infinite—my mind tossed and surged with the ocean. . . .*”

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Charles Lamb, in his essay on “Dream Children; a Reverie,” expresses the same idea very prettily.

“Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when they were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk. which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic

incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimneypiece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining country. But still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up. And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry, too, of the neighbourhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman ; so good, indeed, that she knew all the Psalter by heart, ay, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was ; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer—here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary

movement, till, upon my looking grave, it desisted—the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said “those innocents would do her no harm”; and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grandchildren, having us to the great house in the holydays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed out—sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me—and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them, because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then—and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew-trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir-apples, which

were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about upon the fresh grass with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening too along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that darted to and fro in the fish-pond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings—I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavours of peaches, nectarines, oranges and such-like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then, in somewhat a more heightened tone, I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grandchildren, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L—, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us ; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get, when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters, when there were any out—and yet he loved the old great house and gardens too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries—and how their uncle grew up to man's estate as brave as he was handsome to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially ; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain ;—

and how in after life he became lame-footed too, and I did not always (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed, and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death ; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me, and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarrelling with him (for we quarrelled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him, as he, their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W—n ; and as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial, meant in maidens—when suddenly turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was ; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding, till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance,

which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech : ‘ We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. . . . We are nothing ; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence and a name ’—and immediately waking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor arm-chair, where I had fallen asleep. . . .”

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The same idea may be found in Edgar Allan Poe’s mystical and fascinating poem, “ The Raven.”

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and
weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten
lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a
tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber
door.
“ ’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “ tapping at my chamber
door —

Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon
the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow ;—vainly I had sought to
borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost
Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name
Lenore—

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple
curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt
before

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood
 repeating
 " 'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber
 door—
 Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door ;
 This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger ; hesitating then no
 longer,
 " Sir," said I, " or Madam, truly your forgiveness I
 implore ;
 But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came
 rapping,
 And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber
 door,
 That I scarce was sure I heard you "—here I opened wide
 the door ;—
 Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
 wondering, fearing,
 Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to
 dream before ;
 But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no
 token,
 And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,
 " Lenore ? "
 This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,
 " Lenore ! "—
 Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me
 burning,
 Soon again I heard a tapping something louder than
 before.
 " Surely," said I, " surely that is something at my window
 lattice ;
 Let me see then, what thereat is and this mystery ex-
 plore—
 Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery ex-
 plore ;—
 'Tis the wind and nothing more."

ITS REALITIES AND APPARITIONS 95

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
 In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore.
 Not the least obeisance made he ; not a minute stopped or stayed he ;
 But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
 Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
 By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
 “ Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said,
 “ art sure no craven,
 Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore
 Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore ! ”

* * * * *

How often it may be, in a similar manner, carried away by pictures of reverie which substitute the most pleasing or saddest illusions for the realities of life, our thoughts anchor on to these chimeras and become realities indeed, presenting themselves before us again and again in visible and seemingly substantial forms.

Ferriar relates how a friend of his, whilst travelling alone in a remote part of Scotland, was compelled to ask shelter for the night at a small lonely hut. Upon conducting him to his bedroom the landlady remarked in a mysterious way that he would find the window very insecure. On examination, part of the wall appeared to have been broken down to enlarge the opening. After inquiry, he was told that a pedlar who had lodged in the room a short time

before had committed suicide, and was found hanging behind the door in the morning.

According to the superstition of the country, it was deemed unlucky to remove the body through the door of the house, and to convey it through the window was impossible without removing part of the wall.

As if to upset the traveller's peace of mind, some hints were dropped that the room had been subsequently haunted by the poor man's spirit.

The traveller, having a revolver, laid it under his pillow and retired to rest, not without some degree of apprehension. He, however, eventually fell asleep, but was visited—in a dream—by a frightful apparition, and, awaking in agony, found himself sitting up in bed with a pistol grasped in his right hand.

On casting a fearful glance round the room, he discovered by the moonlight a corpse, dressed in a shroud, reared erect against the wall, close by the window.

With much difficulty he summoned up resolution to approach the dismal object, the features of which, and the minutest parts, he perceived distinctly.

With a courage mixed with fear he passed one hand over it, but felt nothing. And then, dumb-founded, walked backwards to the bed. Then, after a long interval and much reasoning with himself, he renewed his investigation, discovering at length that the object of his terror was produced by the moonbeams falling on a curtain, loosely hung, and moving in the breeze. On this his fancy, impressed by his dream, had pictured with mischievous accuracy the form or ghost of the pedlar's body.

* * * * *

Saint Augustine, in his "City of God," tells of a

man of education who devoted himself to the study of Plato, stating that one night he saw a philosopher, with whom he was intimate, come to him, and expound to him certain propositions in Plato, a thing which he had hitherto persistently refused to do. The next day, seeing this philosopher, he asked him why it was that he came and explained these matters to him in another person's house, when he had refused to do so in his own? The philosopher replied, "I have done nothing of the kind, *although I did dream that I had.*" "Thus," adds the Saint, "the one being perfectly wide awake, saw and heard *by means of a phantom* what the other experienced in a dream. For my own part," he further observes, "if the matter had been related to me by any ordinary person, I should have rejected it as unworthy of belief; but the individual in question was not one who was likely to have been deceived." . . . GREAT SCOTT!!!

* * * * *

As if to express an opinion contrary to that of the Saint, Plutarch acquaints us with the fact that Brutus, when about to leave Asia, had an extraordinary apparition. Thus, a little while before he left, he was sitting alone in his tent, by a dim light, and at a late hour; and when the whole army lay in sleep and silence, as the general sat meditating, he thought he perceived something enter his tent, and, turning towards the door, saw a horribly monstrous spectre standing silently by his side. "What art thou?" said he, boldly; "Art thou god or man; and what is thy business with me?" The spectre answered: "I am thy evil genius, Brutus! Thou wilt see me at Philippi!" To which he calmly replied, "I'll meet thee there"!

When the apparition was gone he called his servant, who told him they had neither heard any noise nor seen any vision.

That night he did not go to rest, but went early in the morning to Cassius, and told him what had happened.

Cassius, who was of the school of Epicurus, and used frequently to dispute with Brutus on these subjects, answered him : " It is the opinion of our sect that not everything we see is real ; for matter is evasive, and sense deceitful. Besides, the impressions received are, by the quick and subtle influence of imagination, thrown into a variety of forms, many of which have no archetypes in nature ; and this the imagination effects as easily as we make an impression on wax. But when the body, as in your case, is fatigued with labour, it naturally suspends or perverts the regular functions of the mind. Upon the whole, it is highly improbable that there should be any such beings as demons or spirits, or that, if there were such, they should assume a human shape or voice, or have any power to affect us. "

* * * * *

That ghosts may be clearly traced as the productions of fancy on a conscience-stricken mind has perhaps nowhere been so forcibly brought to our notice than by Shakespeare in the master-strokes of his own art. In the tragedy of Macbeth the illusion is made to play its part in a fashion which is at once convincing and acceptable. Any mind like the mind of Macbeth, worn by conflict between ambition and the better self, will at last give way, and excited fancy project a ghost of a dagger, a Banquo, or anything, or anybody else.

In the succeeding page it might be of interest to follow this line of thought through a few of its stages. Sully relates, in his "Collection of Memoirs," that the solitary hours of Charles IX. were rendered terrible beyond description by a repetition of the cries and groans which assailed his ears during the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. "Charles," says the illustrious minister, "hearing on the night of that day, and during the whole of the next day, the account of the slaughter of so many old men, women, and children, called apart Master Ambroise Paré, his principal surgeon, to whom he was greatly attached, and said to him, 'Ambroise, I don't know what has come over me during the last two or three days, but I find both my mind and body greatly depressed; and, whether sleeping or waking, the slaughtered bodies, with their hideous and blood-stained countenances, *are always before me*. I wish they had not included the imbecile and the innocent. . . .'"

* * * * *

Hoole, in his "Life of Tasso," tells us that Tasso, whose passion for the Princess d'Est was the cause of all his misfortunes, ended his career by believing that he had a familiar spirit with whom he conversed, and from whom he declared he learnt things which he had never read or heard of, and that indeed were unknown to other persons. Manso, his friend, says that one day, at Besaccio, near Naples, when he endeavoured to convince him of the illusion under which he laboured, the poet replied to him that, "since my reasons are not sufficient to convince you, I will do so by your own experience, and for this purpose I wish you to see with your own eyes this spirit of which I have spoken to you, and for which you will not trust my word."

"I accept the offer," said Manso; and the next day the two were seated before the fire, when "on a sudden he observed that Tasso kept his eye on a window, and remained in a manner immovable. He called him by his name, but received no answer. At last Tasso cried out, 'There is the friendly spirit that is come to converse with me; look! and you will be convinced of the truth of all that I have said.'"

Manso heard him with surprise; looked, but saw nothing, except the sunbeams darting through the windows. He cast his eyes all over the room, but could there perceive nothing, and was just going to ask where the pretended spirit was, when he heard Tasso speak with great earnestness, sometimes putting questions to the spirits, sometimes giving answers, delivering the whole in such a pleasing manner, and in such elevated expressions, that he listened with admiration, and had not the least inclination to interrupt him. At last, the uncommon conversation ended with *the departure of the spirit*—as it appeared, by following Tasso's own words. Then turning to Manso, he asked him if his doubts were removed. Manso was more amazed than ever, and scarce knew what to think of his friend's situation, but waived any further conversation on the subject.

* * * * *

The following story was related some years ago by the chief clerk of a North British Jury Court. It was published together with a ghost ballad which was "sung" at street corners and in market-places.

A Liverpool slave-ship had for its captain a man of variable temper, and although he was ordinarily

kind to the sailors, he was subject to fits of passion during which he became cruel and even tyrannical. As is usual with men of this stamp, he took particular dislike to one of the crew—an old man—abusing and threatening him on every possible occasion.

Once when the old man, named Jack, was getting out a sail, the captain, as was his wont, accused him of being a lubberly rascal, to which Jack naturally took some offence. So exasperated was the captain at this that he ran down to the cabin in a towering rage, seized a gun, loaded it, came on deck, took aim at the old sailor, and shot him. As the sailor lay dying he fixed his eyes on the captain and said with failing breath—so the first mate related—“ You’ve done for me, sir, but I will never leave you.”

In return for this consideration the captain swore at him, and threatened to throw his body in the slave-kettle for boiling—a barbarity which he did really accomplish. Within a short time of this the frightened crew seemed to become possessed with the idea of the dead man’s ghost appearing amongst them during the watches, or that it was the first upon the yard when a sail had to be unfurled or taken in.

As was to be expected, the captain himself experienced in a far greater degree the fear and horror of the crew ; so much so, indeed, that he tremblingly called the mate on one side and said to him, with some effort at being bold : “ I need not tell you what sort of a hand it is we have got on board with us—you have seen him, but only now and again—he said he would never leave me, and he has kept his word—he is always by my side—I am always seeing him—I see him at this very moment, and can stand it no longer—my mind is made up for what I am going to do.” And so saying, he went to the side of the boat, climbed on the rail, and jumped overboard.

An effort was made to rescue him, but it was of no avail.

After being lost sight of for a few seconds he came to the surface, and then, just as he was about to sink again, he gave a look of agony towards the mate, and seeming to spring half out of the water, groaned out his fear by muttering something which sounded like : " By gad, Jack said he would never leave me, and he's got me now "—sank, and was seen no more.

The memory of the past dread deed became " the skeleton in the cupboard." The terrorised mind, haunted by its own imaginings, saw just those ghosts and phantoms which were of its own creation, but they were very real ones all the same.

* * * * *

Another ghost affair somewhat similar to the foregoing is that of an army pay-sergeant who had appropriated to his own use a sum of money with which he was entrusted, and who was prevented from getting away by a small drummer-boy of the regiment who knew of the affair, and who threatened to give information concerning it. The sergeant knew this, and to facilitate his escape, murdered the boy secretly.

He arrived at a seaport town with the intention of emigrating, but there was no boat sailing, and, being tired, he sat down to rest and fell asleep. Here, upon somebody awakening him, he blurted out : " I did not kill him."

As there was by this time a hue and cry after the boy's murderer, he fell under suspicion, but managed eventually to get away, and succeeded for some little time to " make good."

He tried hard to forget the past dark deed, but could not, on account of a ghost which he believed

followed him everywhere—the ghost of a drummer-boy. So convinced was he that a ghost *did* follow him that he imparted his belief to others with so many details that again he was suspected of the murder. Eventually he was recognised as the missing sergeant, was tried, and made a confession of the crime, in which there was much incoherent talk about a ghost which followed him. He was convicted, and finally walked to the gallows in a manner which denoted very clearly that he still believed the ghost of the poor little drummer-boy to be following at his heels.

* * * * *

Many of those ghost-stories which have become historical are, it might be argued, like the foregoing—founded on narratives of ghostly visitants which in reality have existed only in imagination. At times, even in wakefulness, the mind wanders pretty similarly to the way it goes in sleep, and conjures up ghosts and spectres which, through the mystery and awe with which they are associated, leave such an impression behind them as to cause one to believe without any uncertainty that a ghost had really and truly been visibly observed.

In a previous chapter it has been proved—as much as anything of the kind can be proved—that a dream comes as a visitor from what, for the want of a better word, we call the “subconscious,” and there is much evidence to show that the ghost actually and really emanates from the same mysterious abode! “Conscience doth make us brave,” says the poet, and “Conscience doth make cowards of us all,” declares the playwright. And, we might add, it is *conscience* which makes angels to appear before the mind, and raises devils to torment us.

Conscience is a strange, bold disturber, which works upon the imagination with an all-conquering, invincible force. Like faith, it compels one to view things differently on occasions from what they perhaps really and truly are—to feel things that have nothing materialistic about them ; and then to hear voices where no voice exists. Even the tongue itself submits to its sovereign magnate, and has been known to utter a self-accusation from which there has been no reprieve.

* * * *

There are probably few beliefs more universally received among the illiterate as well as the scholarly than this : that the things which are called ghosts are really the souls of those persons whom they are said to represent. More than this, people say that they see, or believe they see, the ghosts of their dead friends and relatives actually clothed in the garments with which they are familiar, even when they know full well that those very garments which aid the recognition have been cut up, given away to “the old clo’ man,” or sold long since, and have gone to goodness knows where, the ghost and its clothes, in such cases, being merely a re-creation by the mind from some impression previously received.

If, however, they should say that they see the ghosts of their dead friends, dressed in white (and often even in the flesh), when they know them to have been dead for years and years, so far as the corporeal body is concerned ; that they hear them speak, although they know that the voice they were wont to listen to in days gone by is silent and still ; then the ghost is far more difficult to analyse.

[The sceptic may well marvel at the mental make-up which pictures a “spirit”—as the saying goes—“all

dressed up and nowhere to go," and may even be excused for being so inquisitive as to ask: "Where did the ghost get the clothes from with which it is dressed?" and, "What becomes of the said clothing when the ghost suddenly disappears into thin air?" —as ghosts will, don't you know!

Other questions of a like nature could be put, and they would be equally difficult to answer.

CHAPTER VI

"Let 'em all come."

—SHAKESPEARE (*Julius Cæsar*, v. ii.).

MANY are the tales told of grisly ghosts and saucer-eyed goblins, but very few of the tellers of these tales have endeavoured to argue it out in their own minds—the possibility or impossibility of the truth of the tales they tell. As with dreams, there has been hardly any inclination to grapple seriously with the problem, but rather a desire to increase the mystery by adding to it fanciful ideas of ghostly visitants who have made their appearance with odours of damp earth, and who in departing have left behind them—not "foot-prints in the sands of time"—but trails of phosphorescent smoke!—like the backfire from a motor-bus.

It is interesting to recall how writers of old have remarked how the presence of saints was believed to spread a sweet perfume throughout apartments where they visited, whilst devils did infect them, and how it was also believed that sweet-smelling perfumes and incense copiously spread about had the effect of driving away evil spirits.

Rather than take all ghost-stories, like an elephant taking buns, far better would it be if we looked for the solving of the mystery in the realm of the mind itself.

* * * * *

The following incident is not a "ghost-story," as

ghost-stories go, but it has a bearing on the subject ; it was originally related to an eminent author by the physician under whose observation the case came.

The subject concerned in the narrative was well known to society, and was being treated by his physician for a depression of spirits and a melancholy which seemed to hang over everything he did and everywhere he went. Such a hold had it got upon him that his life had become a burden, not only to himself but to his friends, for he would impress them with his misery without imparting to them the cause of it, which without a doubt he himself knew.

To his doctor, and only to his doctor, did he tell his story, and it was this : that he was haunted by a vision of Death, which came to him in the shape of *a skeleton* on every possible and impossible occasion. It took the leading part among the characters of his dreams, and was, moreover, the constant companion of his wakefulness. But the skeleton, so he said, had not always been with him thus, for at first it was the ghost of a cat which used to persecute him ; then the cat went away, and, like another ghostly cat, it only left its ghost of a smile behind it to be remembered by. Its place was taken by an apparition of a gentleman in black, which, as a kind of gentleman usher, used to meet him on the stairs, in corridors, outhouses, and other places, and when it had nearly driven him frantic by the attentions which it paid him, disappeared, with a great banging of doors. Then this last horrible phantom—a grinning skeleton—came to fill the void.

The poor deluded man was sensible enough to say that he *did not believe in ghosts in the ordinary way*, and that the cat, the gentleman-usher, and the skeleton, were all creations of a lively mind, but that *by their continual appearance* they had become very

real to him. So persistently did these signs of death, as he took them to be, appear to him that he imagined himself to be dying under the oppression of a fatal disease which was consuming his vital powers. It was evident to the doctor that he was, as he said, dying—a wasted victim to an imaginary disease, and as he sat by the bed on which the poor man lay he gathered from him that at that very moment the skeleton was seated on a chair at the foot of the bed.

The doctor tried to explain the impossibility of such a thing happening in reality, and the sick man then voluntarily said he did not believe it was *really* there. So the doctor invited him to prove the illusion by getting out of bed and sitting in the chair himself, as it was quite empty. But no! our friend was “not having any,” so the doctor, to convince the man that the skeleton in the chair was only fancy, got up from where he was sitting, crossed the room, and seated himself in the chair occupied by the imaginary skeleton.

“Now,” said he, “can you see the skeleton?”

The reply was, “No, not exactly, for you are betwixt him and me; but I can see his skull peeping over your shoulder.”

It is alleged that the man of physic, as might be expected, was startled by such an answer. The patient, however, died soon after, heartbroken by forebodings caused by an imaginary apparition, the actual existence of which he was sensible enough at times to give no heed.

* * * * *

Delusions of ghost-craft arising from a morbid condition of the mind which “makes the eyes the fools of the other senses” might be mentioned *ad infinitum*. An experience somewhat analogous to

that just told, except that it demonstrates a victory of good sense over superstitious fear, occurred in the student's days of the late Dr. Gooch, and was duly reported in the *Times* newspaper. In his early apprentice days he slept in a room where there was a cupboard, and in this cupboard was an old second-hand skeleton, kept for osteological demonstrations. One may easily imagine the feelings of a youngster trying to sleep in such strange company. He may even have cogitated on those lines from Spenser's "Færie Queen" when—

"On a chearless night yon wicket open flew,
As with mightly leavers had been tore ;
And forth yssewd, as on the redy flore
Of some theatre—a *grave personage*."

However, "one night," he said, "I went to bed, and the moonlight which fell brightly in my room showed me distinctly the panelled door, behind which hung my silent acquaintance. I could not help thinking of him, and although I tried to think of something else, could not. I shut my eyes and began to forget myself, when—whether I was awake or asleep, or between both, I cannot tell—but suddenly I felt two bony hands grasp my ankles and pull me down the bed"—ugh !

"If it had been real," the doctor added, "it could not have been more distinct."

* * * * *

John Selden, the learned antiquarian and lawyer, has left it on record how on one occasion he was visited by a man who complained of ghosts and devils trying to *make him do things*. It is of some interest in these rational days of mind-healing, and the quaint style in which Selden tells the story

makes it worth repeating: "A person of quality came to my chambers in the Temple, and told me he had two devils in his head, and that at just that time one of them bid him kill me; with that I began to be afraid, and thought he was mad.

"He said he knew I could cure him, and therefore entreated me to give him something, for he was resolved to go to nobody else.

"I, perceiving what an opinion he had of me, and that it was only melancholy that troubled him, took him in hand, and warranted him if only he would take my advice and follow my directions, to cure him in a short time. Therefore I desired him to let me alone for about an hour, and then to come again, which he was very willing to do.

"In the meantime I got a card, and wrapped it up handsome in a piece of coloured paper, and put strings to it, and when he came gave it him to hang about his neck, charging him withal that he should not disorder himself neither with over-eating nor drinking, but eat very little supper, and say his prayers when he went to bed, and I made no question but that he would be well in three or four days.

"Within that time I went to dinner to his house, and asked him how he did. He said he was much better, but not perfectly well, for in truth he had not dealt fairly with me. He had had *four* devils in his head, and now *two* of them were gone with that which I had given him, but the other two troubled him still.

" 'Well,' said I, 'I am glad two of them are gone; and the other two will soon go likewise'; so I gave him another decoration to hang about his neck.

"Three days after this he came to me and professed he was now as well as ever he was in his life, and did extremely thank me for the great care I had taken of him.

"I, fearing lest he might relapse into the like distemper, told him that there was none but myself and one other in the whole town that could cure him of the devils in his head, and that was Dr. Harvey (whom I had prepared), and wished him if ever he found himself ill in my absence to go to him, for he could cure his disease as well as I could.

"The gentleman lived many years after this," added the antiquarian, "and was never similarly troubled."

* * * *

The master of a large merchant vessel relates the following story in connection with a ghost which was said to haunt his ship and terrorise the crew. It happened in this way: When the vessel was at sea one of the crew was murdered by the cook, and a report got about among them that in the night watches the ghost of the dead sailor walked the deck. So strong had this idea got a hold on them that it seemed quite within the bounds of probability that at the next port where the boat touched the crew would desert rather than remain aboard with the ghost as a passenger. To prevent the desertion of the crew in such a fashion, the captain determined *to prove* the ghost to be an illusion.

Upon inquiry, he found that, although the majority of the crew pretended to have been actual spectators of the ghost's rambles, the weight of their evidence rested upon the statement of the mate, who was—with the exception of being a little superstitious—an honest and sensible man, and one in whom there was no reason to suspect wilful deceit. This mate affirmed to the captain with the deepest sincerity that the ghost of the murdered sailor appeared to him almost nightly; that it led him from his bunk or

hammock, and worried him exceedingly. Indeed, these communications were made to the captain with a horror of expression which intimated very clearly the reality of the distressed man's convictions.

The captain, with wisdom and forethought, decided upon his mode of action, which was to lay the ghost—he *watched the ghost-seer* as he lay asleep and also when he woke.

When the ship's bell struck twelve, the sleeping mate, startled from his sleep, arose, and with a ghastly look proceeded to that part of the ship where the ghost was said to have been in the habit of roaming. He was then seen to sit down, and with eyes widely open was staring at some object which, evidently to him, was extremely horrible. After a little while he arose, went and fetched a tin can, filled it with water, and returned—muttering all the time to himself something which could not be understood. Then, sprinkling the contents of the can upon the deck, he returned to his bunk, climbed into it, and resumed his sleep.

The next morning there was the usual ghost-story, and the mate added that he had at last succeeded in frightening the ghost away by the sprinkling of some holy water!

The captain, who was an intelligent man, proved beyond a doubt that the mate was a somnambulist, and in that peculiar state between sleeping and waking had walked the deck, and whilst in this condition his excited imagination, acting upon his half-waking senses, although it found him sensible enough to know *where he was*, had not the fortune to find him sensible enough to realise and to judge of the objects which were before him. The ghost was a mere figment of his disordered mind.

* * * * *

How many ghost-stories there must be which apparently, although credible enough as related, are rendered quite unbelievable by the application of a little common-sense reasoning, or by some chance incident which has made a discovery of the illusion possible. For instance, in Plymouth some time back there was an association of men and women who met occasionally in a summer-house standing alone in the grounds of a tavern to discuss literature and science.

This meeting-place was some distance from the house of Bacchus, and one cold winter's night the members had gathered together for their usual entertainment, when it was announced that the president, who was an old man, was absent, as he was very ill and was expected to die.

Out of respect for the president his chair remained unoccupied whilst the meeting was in progress, and at its close the conversation turned upon the loss the society would entail upon the death of its respected "father."

The meeting being over, the departing members were engaged in the sombre light of a pale moon discussing their melancholy theme, when, to their surprise, who should walk up the meadow path but the "ghost" of the old gentleman who was the subject of their sorrow.

There he was, all dressed up in wrapper white and night-cap tight, and with a face which in appearance resembled the cadaverous look of the dead. The frightened members perceiving the ghost's destination to be that of the summer-house fell back to let him pass. Slithering into the apartment with unusual gravity, and making direct for the chair, he sat down; then, drinking from the glass of water which had been placed on the table, he arose, bowed to the

audience which *would* have been there had it not already departed, bowed once more, and then toddled off, without saying a word, and as quietly as had been *its* arrival.

After the apparition had departed, the members gathered up enough courage to return to the summer-house, and discuss further this extraordinary occurrence.

They decided after much whispering and dumb-show to send two of their party, late as it was, to the old gentleman's residence with inquiries as to how he was getting along. Judge of their amazement when they arrived there and were told that he was dead, having, as a matter of fact, died about an hour before the members had arrived to make their inquiries.

The society of which the old gentleman was president being composed of men and women of a philosophic turn of mind would not allow that they had actually seen a ghost, but, nevertheless, the affair was more than half a mystery, and would have remained so to this day but for the fact of a confession on the part of a nurse some time afterwards.

It would appear that the old gentleman—like Mr. Dick—suffered from an affliction of the mind, and this nurse had been employed to tend and watch him during his illness. On the adventurous evening on which his “ghost” had appeared at the club, she had neglected her duties by falling asleep, and whilst she slept he had got up, ill as he was, had passed out of the house, crossed the meadow to the grounds in which the summer-house stood, walked up the old path into the house, and had occupied his accustomed place. The nurse also said that when she awoke from her stolen siesta, and perceived his bed to be empty, she searched the house, and, not finding him,

she went to the door and saw him just returning in a dazed condition and nearly dead. He was hurried back to bed and died of exhaustion almost immediately.

The inquiring visitors from the club had called about an hour after this untoward happening.

* * * * *

There are "ghosts," and ghosts, and of all the ghosts that ever were or ever will be it is safe to say that the most amusing is that known as the "racketty" one—made in Germany. Some folk imagine that the escapades of "the racketty ghost" belong to a past age when people were more credulous than they are to-day; but it does not. Only recently there have been whole columns in certain newspapers "read by the million" concerning the carrying-on of a "poltergeist" (or noisy ghost) in a dug-out somewhere in the county of Kent. "Poltergeist," by the way, is derived from the German "polter" (noise, uproar), "geist" (ghost). The story runs as follows—

In a particular district in Kent there is, or was in the year 1918, a manor house, through the grounds of which the troops, for the defence of London, had dug a deep trench, leading to a moat. In this moat there is another dug-out, and in this dug-out at intervals there appears a "poltergeist" that amuses itself and annoys anybody that happens to be near by chucking lumps of earth and other things at them. If the noisy German ghost would keep within the limits of the moat it would not matter so much, but it does not, for in the stilly hours it stalks abroad and pays nocturnal visits to old people occupying dismal cottages in unfrequented parts of the county, and then makes its presence known by tumbling over the

mat, throwing the chairs down, breaking the crockery, and otherwise misbehaving itself like a knock-about cheapjack.

In the particular dug-out aforementioned there was on one occasion a soldier, besides the man who supervised the construction of it, and a boy, when all of a sudden there was a great noise, and the supervisor was almost stunned by a chunk of earth which came flying through the air "and 'it 'im on the 'ead." Before he had time to say, "What's that?" another clod hit him on the right ear, and "a lump of rock dropped on his hand," so that he had what one would call a nasty time of it. The soldier also had some excitement, for he declared that "after having had a shock and a couple of days off in consequence," he returned to the moat, but no sooner had he arrived than the ghost not only got up to its old tricks, but this time tried to *strafe* him with a "sledge-hammer weighing about fourteen pounds," then with a pickaxe. Then three chairs which were in the cave commenced jumping in a most animated fashion, which developed into something resembling the "Turkey Trot" and ended with a kind of "Bunny Hug."

If you do not believe it there is the unimpeachable evidence of the boy who "saw" strange blasts of sandy wind blow the candles out, that changed bricks from one pile on to another, that caused big stones to lift themselves some inches before they remembered the laws of gravitation, and even caused articles to arrive in the particular dug-out that should have been at home in other places.

So mysteriously exciting indeed did the whole affair become, and so much attention and discussion did it create, that men of science and literature thought it deserving of their consideration. Forth-

with the spot was visited by an ex-president of the Psychical Research Society and a Knight of Literature, who, by the way, has written much and added considerably to the sum total of our knowledge of things spooky. Their inquiries at the moat elicited much of an interesting and corroborative nature, but beyond this the writer believes he is correct in saying that nothing unusual occurred.

* * * * *

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there *are* many ghost-stories which, as ghost-stories go, and as far as ghosts are concerned, are as real as they possibly can be, as for example, the ghost of Hamlet. But the supernatural tale which is the agreeable mode of amusement for dark evenings is another proposition altogether. The ordinary ghost-story is told, repeated, added to, and told again—and believed—much in the same way as was the myth concerning those millions of Russians—bless me, they *will* continue to be ubiquitous—who were supposed to have come down from Scotland in the early days of the Great War. Nobody actually saw them, but nearly everybody knew someone else who had seen them—or had given them apples as they passed through railway-stations in trains with drawn blinds.

It reminds one of the joker, who, for a wager, some years ago, when Northumberland House stood at Charing Cross on what is now Northumberland Avenue, planted himself on the opposite side of the way to which the house stood, and in an attitude of astonishment, and with his eyes riveted on the tail of the metallic lion which graced the gateway of the mansion, succeeded in attracting the attention of those passers-by, who looked first at him and then at the lion, and when the crowd got big enough, by

muttering in a stage whisper : " By heavens, it wags ! It wags again ! " In a few minutes he had succeeded in gathering in the immediate vicinity a mob of goodly dimensions, many of whom on departing really believed that they had seen the lion wag his tail ; and many others waited hours in the hope of seeing the remarkable performance repeated.

The writer of this book well remembers going one night, some years ago, to an old churchyard which was said to be haunted, and where the ghost was to be " seen " jumping about among the tombstones like a young springbok or kangaroo. It was a beautiful starry night, and the moon, being at full, shone gloriously, excepting that every now and again its light was shut off by scurrying clouds. The churchyard having gained some notoriety on account of its nightly visitor, there was on the occasion of his visit quite a cheerful company " to see the fun," all armed with sticks and stones and other implements of primitive warfare too numerous to mention. After waiting patiently for some time, and in the momentary darkness caused by a clouding of " the parish lantern," there was a most weird catcall-of-a-scream from over the other side of the cemetery, which of itself was enough to make the flesh go " goosey " and the mind to squint. Someone called out excitedly, " There it goes ! " and, sure enough, it had gone—if it had ever been there at all. However, the writer did not see it, and, what is more, he doesn't believe anybody else did ; but on the morrow *we all said we saw it !*

CHAPTER VII

*" 'Tis now the witching time of night
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to the world."*

—SHAKESPEARE.

THAT ghosts should be so closely associated with churchyards, tombs, and sepulchres, and that they came out at dusk and wandered about until cock-crow is a belief as old as antiquity itself.

"I have heard," says our National Bard,
"The cock, that is the trumpet of the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day ; and, at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
The extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confines. . . .
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
This bird of dawning singeth all night long ;
And then they say no spirit dares stir abroad ;
The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, no witch hath power to charm,
So gracious and so hallowed is the time."

It was also believed in olden times that the church-yard ghost—commonly called a spook—had quite an important duty to perform in watching over dead bodies to which the church had not performed its orthodox rites—at least, this used to be the popular belief, and this accounts for the fact perhaps why it is that in most old pictures of graveyards one is

accustomed to see a ghostly apparition wandering among the tombstones.

Another belief was that a ghost always had a fond affection to haunt the particular spot where some unfortunate creature had been murdered and secretly buried. Not so long ago there was a story current that a certain house in one of our villages was haunted by an apparition that had been seen repeatedly standing on the kitchen hearthstone. A combination of curiosity and suspicion caused the stone to be raised, and underneath it, strangely enough, was found the remains of an infant. It was declared that the last tenant, a female, had left the house in an abrupt manner, and that all inquiries concerning her whereabouts had been futile.

* * * * *

It is all very strange the manner in which these phantasms, or feelings of fear, accompanied by inexpressible uncanniness, take possession of an otherwise tranquil mind. Many years ago, when the writer of this book was a lad, he had occasionally to go to a bookstore on the east side of the Fleet Street end of Fetter Lane. The store was a miserable shanty, being part of half a dozen or so houses which, through the owner disappearing, had been left derelict and fallen into ruin, and which had at some time or other partly fallen down and then been boarded up. Be that as it may, they were commonly referred to as being "in chancery."

Running along the side and rear of these dismal ruins there was a court or alley-way, which being somewhat off the busy highway was frequented by the flotsam and jetsam of Society's outcasts. Along this alley-way, on each side, were the rusty iron cellar gratings of the old houses, partly covered with

rough wood and overgrown with rank grass, and it was in passing by these of a winter's evening, in taking a short cut from the bookstore to the King's printers behind it, that the writer had on more than one occasion, for no imaginable earthly reason, a dread and a fearsome feeling amounting to extreme uncanniness.

Since those days, years have come and gone, and the changes brought about by the flight of time had left the recollection of it all on the limbo of forgotten things until just recently—over thirty years afterwards. The memory of it was resuscitated in reading an old account of the neighbourhood, written by Leigh Hunt before the writer of this book was born, and in the account one comes across the following remarkable paragraph: “In this neighbourhood, Fetter Lane, also dwelt the infamous Elizabeth Brownrigg, who was executed in 1767 for the murder of one of her apprentices. Her house with the cellar in which she used to confine her starved and tortured victims, and *from the gratings* of which their cries of distress were heard, was one of those on the *east side of the lane, looking into the long and narrow alley behind*, called Flower-de-Luce Court.”

It is, as I have said, all very strange . . . and *sets one thinking!*

* * * * *

Concerning apparitions and the numerous people who have borne witness to them, one is compelled to ask whether there may not be some acceptable explanation to the mysterious phenomena beyond the suggestion that they are merely illusionary creations of the mind which sees them.

The following story has been given with some authority: A candidate for Holy Orders is staying

with some friends out in the country. At night-time they take a stroll round the garden, arm-in-arm. As they are passing a particular spot the student's arm jerks as though it had touched an electric wire. His friends ask him, "What is the matter?" He, with a feeling of dread and fearing their gibes, replies, "Oh, nothing!" and tries to forget all about it.

During the evening, the subject being referred to, the student confessed that once before he had a similar experience and avowed that the peculiar sensations arose from being in the vicinity of where there were human remains. He furthermore declared that on the previous occasion a buried body had subsequently been unearthed, and that he believed the sensations of the evening to have been caused, as before, by his coming into a sphere of mystery.

As if by way of testing the assertion, it was agreed to return at night with a companion and to linger over the part of the garden where such strange phenomena had been experienced.

Accordingly the student and a friend fulfilled the agreement, and as they approached to within ten feet of the place aforementioned they noticed a luminous figure of a female hovering over it, self-supported in the air, with the feet some inches from the ground. At first they would go no further, but, gathering up their courage, they approached nearer and cut at the figure with the sticks which they carried. The sticks cut through it as though it were smoke, and then it formed up again to the shape of a female. It did not stay exactly in the one place, but appeared at first a little to the left, and then a little to the right—a kind of phosphorescent fog, without tangibility.

Again on the following night the same performance was gone through, and it was then decided to dig up

the ground. Upon this being done, there was found at some depth under a layer of quicklime the body of a woman.

This seems to have taken away the mysterious cause of the phenomena, because there was no further apparition, neither was the student affected when passing over the place later on.

With regard to these luminous ghost-like figures which are supposed to have been seen over graves orthodox and otherwise, there are many "explanations." The most ingenious is that a dead body gives off certain chemical gases in decomposition which are luminous in the dark; and as they escape from the earth they assume, by some strange means, a shape or form which is counterpart of the body from which they have escaped. This is called by some a "corpse-candle," and is said to hover above the body; a gust of wind will blow it away to another part of the graveyard, but it is capable of returning, much as the dove returned to the ark.

* * * * *

Whilst speaking of ghostly visitants the opportunity comes for making mention of those weird beliefs and superstitions which are told of VAMPIRES. . . . "What is a vampire," did you say? Well, it was supposed to be a visitant from the grave! and according to a very old lexicon: "A vampire is a dead body which continues to live in the grave; which it leaves by night for the purpose of sucking the blood of the living, whereby it is nourished and preserved in good condition, instead of becoming decomposed like other dead bodies." . . . This vampire, after paying his friends a visit, was in the habit of returning to his abode among the dead—at least that is what the vulgar superstition of a past age believed.

With the reader's permission, which I assume is granted, we will ponder together over one or two stories concerning him.

By the way ! The vampire used to visit people in their sleep and—"bite them on the neck"—the brute ! The general sequel to the bite was a "death trance," from which the victim only awoke *after* having been buried and blossoming into a vampire also. The antidote for counteracting the effects of the bite was earth—earth from the vampire's grave, which had to be eaten by the bitten one.

As late as the eighteenth century "vampirism" was frightfully "prevalent" in eastern Europe, where numbers of people died from it—or the fear of it.

Near Belgrade, for instance, there was a young man named Arnod in love with a beautiful girl of seventeen summers (or thereabouts, for it doesn't really matter much), named Nina, but he *was* sad, for he had just returned from Cossova, where, as he declared, the people were dying of fright because they had been visited by a vampire. This Arnod must have been a fatalist indeed, for he added that upon the occasion of the vampire's visit he himself was present, and the foreboding was a bad one—he would die and become a vampire himself. Sure enough, a few days afterwards Arnod fell from a load of hay and broke his blessed neck (as they thought, but he only fell out of the cart into a death-trance) and was buried.

Some three weeks afterwards the beautiful girl of seventeen summers, together with some neighbours, complained that the vampire Arnod was haunting them with his unwelcome attentions, and that four people had been bitten—"in the neck"—and had died in consequence.

The authorities to whom the complaint had been

made were procrastinators of the first order. They allowed the people to become "panicky" with a popular terror before they realised how necessary it was to allay a spreading of the superstitious belief which promised to carry off men and women like a plague, so something had to be done.

On a grey morning forty days afterwards a non-descript party consisting of a sexton and two surgeons, armed with spades and pickaxes, and one drummer-boy carrying a box of surgical instruments, wended their way to the churchyard where the perturbing Arnod had been buried. They were going to find out whether he was a vampire or not, and if he proved to be one they were going to treat him as they treated all vampires—by driving a big wooden spike through his chest.

They reached the cemetery and found the grave, and the sexton began to dig with a right good will. Presently the pickaxe struck the coffin-lid and pulled it off, and there was Arnod lying on his side asleep. The sexton pulled him over, gazed surprisedly, and then, in a voice of devilish delight, cried out, "What! Ha, ha! Your mouth not wiped since last night's work!" At this the spectators shuddered and the boy dropped the instruments into the grave and then fell in after them.

When the boy and the instruments had been picked up and put together again, further attention was paid to Arnod.

Arnod proved himself to be a vampire, for his face "did have a complexion upon it," and he "did appear as though he had not been dead a day." So without any more ado they spiked him—and as they did it "the corpse groaned."

The body was then burned and the ashes thrown into the grave.

Other coffins in this same cemetery were also opened, and upon examination four of them contained vampires, who were treated in the same manner.

These decisive measures, however, failed to extinguish the evil which was believed to hang over the neighbourhood, and about five years after the vampires became so alarmingly troublesome that the authorities had all the graves opened, the contents were officially anatomised, and where it was thought advisable bodies were treated as that of poor Arnod.

The foregoing, however improbable it may appear, is no fairy-tale, but a record of actual happenings. It is in a document bearing the date of June 7, 1832, Meduegna, near Belgrade. It is signed by three regimental surgeons and countersigned by a lieutenant-colonel and a sub-lieutenant.

* * * * *

If the reader wants something even more startling there is the following: In the district of Kring a man died, was buried, and became a vampire. His vampirism being a nuisance and "the cause of many deaths," it was decided to "stake him." Although he had been dead some days, it was discovered upon opening his coffin that his face had not only a fresh appearance, but that his features made some natural sort of movement—as though he smiled. He even opened his mouth, so it is asserted, as if to breathe some fresh air. A priest arriving on the scene held a crucifix before his half-opened eyes, crying out at the same time in a loud voice: "See, this is Jesus Christ who died for you and redeemed your soul from hell." As the voice acted upon the "dead" man's hearing he began to weep, and the authorities, believing this and other strange happenings to be proof that he *was* a vampire, promptly replied by hacking off his

head. As the dead man's head rolled away from his body there came from it a screech which struck dumb terror into the souls of those living witnesses whose company it had departed from.

* * * * *

With regard to these vampire stories, the thing that excites wonder is not so much the stories themselves, but that they should ever have become part of the popular beliefs of any community. Even if, as was thought probable, the fresh-looking appearance of the skin indicated that an unfortunate individual had been buried whilst in a condition of trance which in some ways resembled death itself, it is difficult to know how they could reconcile with their own reasoning powers, however primitive, the belief that *a body* could leave the grave in which it had been buried, could pay nocturnal visits, *and then return* to its dark abode, without showing any disturbance of graves or grave slabs.

That there are conditions of trance resembling death there is no denying, and from time to time one comes across them in the daily news-sheet, but happily they are of infrequent occurrence.

Two striking instances of this are given in my little book on "DREAMS," and although there are quite a number of other cases which might be quoted, perhaps one or two here will suffice.

* * * * *

In the *Journal des Savants* there appeared the following: The wife of a certain colonel died—or at least appeared to do so. The husband, who was affectionately regarded towards her in life, felt keenly the fate which had deprived him of his life's companion; so much, indeed, that he placed himself on

guard with a loaded revolver in the room where the body of his wife lay, and threatened to shoot anyone who dared to remove it. On the eighth day, as he sat bedewing her hands with his tears, a distant church-bell began to ring for evening service; she that was "dead" sat up and said: "That is the last bell; we shall be too late." The report adds rather bluntly: "She recovered"!

* * * * *

In the Swiss hospital of Paderboon the death occurred of a young man named Caspar Kreite who, twenty-four hours after drawing his last breath, opened his eyes, and upon his wrist being felt his pulse could be recognised beating feebly and irregularly for just a few minutes. He remained "as still as death" for a period of four days after, when he changed the position of one hand. Then there appeared a vertical fold in the skin of the forehead, which made him appear as though he was displeased—as well he might be—and frowning, lasting for nine days. The lips retained a redness for eighteen days. On the nineteenth, putrefaction set in, and he was buried.

* * * * *

Professor Monti, the historiobiographer to Napoleon, in a letter to his friend Albrecht Haller, the Gottingen anatomist, mentions that he had come across several people who had the power of assuming death at will. He mentioned two: one a priest and the other a peasant. There was also an army colonel who invited the professors to gather round and witness his voluntary "dying" and coming back to life again. The invitation was accepted. The colonel laid on his back and "died"—like a good

ITS REALITIES AND APPARITIONS 129

little doggie—with one doctor holding his wrist for pulsations and another with hand placed on his heart for detecting heart-beats. At the end of a few seconds pulsations and breathing were no longer observed, and the witnesses satisfied themselves that all was over. Then, after the witnesses had been discussing the phenomena for thirty minutes and were about to depart, they were attracted to the colonel *by seeing his body move*. Taking up their positions once more for observation, they were rewarded by the recognition of the heart's motion, breathing, and consciousness.

CHAPTER VIII

*“ . . . Art thou anything ?
Art thou some god,
Some angel, or some devil,
That makest my blood cold,
And my hair to stand on end ? ”*

—SHAKESPEARE.

PERHAPS it would be wise in considering “ the authenticity ” of ghost-stories to pay some attention to the possibility of fraud and even of wilful deception: as, for instance, that connected with the historical commission to the palace of Woodstock in the reign of Charles I.

When the Long Parliament Commissioners arrived to do their work they found that they had not only to surmount the difficulties brought about by the myrmidons of a materialistic world bent upon their undoing, but that ghosts from the spiritual realm had been called in by the King's followers to impede their progress. Spectres made their appearance in all manner of unexpected places when the Commissioners were awake, and when they slept their beds were lifted from the bottom in some mysterious manner and dropped with a thud. Nor did the trouble end here, for trenchers flew at their heads when they feasted, and unearthly dogs chased them when they fasted. Hoofs without horses would kick out the tapers, and other fiendish spirits would cut such capers that the Commissioners in dire despair

chose rather to depart in silence than die of fright.

* * * * *

Not so many years ago there appeared in one of the London quarterlies an article entitled "Visible Apparitions," and in it the writer recorded some extraordinary happenings. He declared that Sir Edmund Hornby, who at one time was a Judge of the Supreme Consular Court of China and Japan, had told him how it had been a custom with him to allow reporters to call at his residence on the day before certain trials so that they might be acquainted with the procedure of the day's business. One evening Sir Edmund retired to rest earlier than was usual, but before doing so wrote out the procedure ready for the reporter and gave it to the butler, with instructions that he was to hand it to the reporter when he called.

The judge was soon asleep; a slight knocking sound, however, as though someone was tapping at his bedroom door, disturbed his tranquil repose and roused him into one of those maudlin conditions which is a cross between slumber and wakefulness. As the tapping continued, the judge called out: "Come in!" and in response thereto the handle turned, the door slowly opened, and in walked the reporter, saying that he had called for the proceedings. Sir Edmund, protesting against the intrusion, told the man to go to the—no! not the devil, as indeed he would have been justified in doing—but to the butler, which he accordingly did. But a few minutes afterwards, however, he returned, appeared to be in great distress, and making some kind of excuse, asked that he might be allowed to take down in shorthand the orders for the day.

Again he was instructed to proceed to the butler,

and made as if to go, but when he got to the door he returned imploringly and requested that his desire should be complied with.

Sir Edmund, fearing the altercation would awaken his wife, granted the request, and the reporter making his notes withdrew.

At that moment Lady Hornby awoke, the clock was at half-past one, and the unusual incident was fully related to her.

When the judge took his accustomed place in Court the next day there was no reporter present, so the question was asked of the usher: "Where is he?" The usher replied: "He is dead; he died at half-past one this morning"!

He had left his house the night before and had not returned; search was made, and he was discovered in the street—dead. An inquest was afterwards held, and the cause of death was heart disease.

Now, if the story ended here it would be quite suitable to be added to that long list of similar "supernatural ghostly phenomena" which through the ages has been growing and growing until now it has lengthened itself to such an extent that the brain of the cleverest living mathematician would crack before it could solve the problem as to how many times it would be likely to encircle the earth, but it does *not* end here!

The story at the time (1884) attracted a deal of attention; and among those that heard of it was a Mr. Balfour, then editor of the *North China Herald*. He happened to know Sir Edmund Hornby intimately and was also well acquainted with the reporter whose ghost figured in the story.

Being sceptical as to the accuracy of it, he questioned several and made inquiries of the judge, the usher, and the coroner. He found out from them that

the "facts" almost from beginning to end were a tissue of "terminological inexactitudes."

In the first place, the reporter died, not at half-past one in the morning, but at eight o'clock, after a good night's rest. The coroner stated that no inquest had been held; and the judge admitted to its inaccuracy inasmuch as his wife, who was said to have awakened to hear the story, had then been dead for more than two years.

* * * * *

Among some old records I find that the village of Stockwell, near London, was in the year 1772 perturbed considerably by a ghost or other invisible agent which caused chairs to dance and made plates and dishes fly across rooms in a most alarming fashion. A cessation of these disturbing factors, however, only occurred when the family and the whole of the household were at prayers, and, let it be said, the only person about the house who was mentally undisturbed by the mysterious proceedings was the maid-of-all-work. So great was the commotion said to be on one occasion that only one or two articles out of a whole china set escaped the smashing.

Being unable to endure a continuance of these ghostly doings, the old lady with her maid left the house, but as the same disturbances repeated themselves in the home where they had taken shelter a strict watch was kept, and the maid fell under suspicion of being the spiritual culprit.

Her guilt was eventually proved by her being caught in the very act of affixing long horse-hairs tied together to almost every movable thing in the room. One end of these hairs she would tie to a table-leg or some other article of furniture whilst

the other end would be tied to the handle of a cup or a plate on the dresser. So cleverly did she do it that any movement about the room would cause the confusion : the opening of a door would pull all the things off the mantelshelf or cause a jar to fall at one's feet or on one's head : the moving of a chair would pull the teapot over, and so on. Such a stir did the whole thing cause among the populace of the once quiet little village that the " Stockwell Ghost " was the talk of the town.

* * * * *

In the Surrey town of Dorking there was a delusion almost as gross, the memory of which probably remains for a truth to this day. At a particular mansion house in this town, wherein had lived a noble lady, almost alone, and which had been uninhabited for some time, a ghost was seen to walk at all hours and in all places. It was believed to be the ghost of the old lady, and at night time it would walk abroad in the grounds, holding a lighted candle. Let the wind blow ever so much it could not blow that candle out. The ghost would enter the mansion, and then its shadow could be seen on walls of rooms and on the windows as it rambled about. Sometimes it took its walks abroad as far as the little heath called Cottman Dean.

People passing the mansion by day would hear strange noises, and pilgrims homeward bound at night declared they could, like Hamlet's ghost, " a tale unfold, whose lightest word—

Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
Thy knotty and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end,
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine."

It turned out upon investigation that in that town there was a boarding-school for boys, and there were in this particular school some roguish London boys who contrived all this business from beginning to end. First they obtained a strong cord, and tying one end of it to an old box which had been left in an upper room (for they had found means to get in and out of the house at will), had artfully brought the other end down outside the house to a secret place where it could not easily be seen, and by this they pulled the old box up some distance from the floor, and then of a sudden let it fall, making a great noise which echoed and re-echoed through the rooms of the otherwise empty mansion. Other boys of the same school being "in the know," would call out excitedly to the women-folk living near by that if they listened they could hear the ghost of the old lady playing her pranks. Then they would assemble in the courtyard where the noise could be heard, but not one would venture to go up the stairs—they pretended to be too afraid! If any did offer to go up a little way, all was quiet until they got to the top of the first flight and then *bang* would go the old box as it was pulled up and then dropped. At night also the boys befooled the old people. One of them had in his possession a dark-lantern, and with this he walked about the grounds, sometimes showing the light on one side and then on the other. The other boys worked up a bit of excitement by standing outside the gate, and remarking upon the strange happenings, in a kind of stage whisper which was meant for other ears than those of their particular chums. Then the light would go out and it would be seen up in a tree. Then as quickly as possible the light would show itself in some other place and the watching boys would say: "There she goes!" and the country

people standing near, seeing the light and hearing the remark, would say : " Who is it ? " and the answer was : " Why, the old lady with the candle ! "

When the noodles heard the box fall they imagined all manner of ghostly things ; some even declared they saw a ghost at such and such a window, and went so far as to detail particulars as to what the ghost was wearing in the way of apparel, until another, as moon-blind as herself, declared *she saw* the ghost just as it was described to her. So the twin sisters, Rumour and Gossip, span a yarn about the house being haunted by an old lady with " a big bright light " which is more wonderful than Aladdin's wonderful lamp.

* * * * *

If happenings as interesting as the foregoing, and of more recent date, are desired, one has only to turn to the daily papers of February 18th, 1919, to find them. Indeed, so important and mysterious was the thing deemed to be by newspaper proprietors that whole " contents bills " were given to the announcement of it.

Following is an abbreviated account taken from a morning paper.

THE INVISIBLE HAND.

GREAT NOVELIST'S STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

COLLIER'S MAGIC AT A SÉANCE.

Ghostly antics in a darkened room, vouched for by a well-known novelist, and witnessed by a Chief Constable, were described yesterday in a Cardiff newspaper.

They took place at a spiritualist séance on Saturday evening at a private residence near the town.

Describing what happened, the novelist told the newspaper representative that there were about twenty persons present, including himself, his wife, a Justice of the Peace, a superintendent of police, a chief constable, and various well-known local celebrities.

The medium was a very respectable collier, of Penyardarren. He was accompanied by his brother, and, according to the narrator, "looked more like international footballers than spiritualistic media. They were fine specimens of humanity, perfectly open, and insisted on being thoroughly searched before the phenomena appeared."

Describing what followed, the novelist said :

"We went over all their clothes, took their boots off, and they had nothing with them except a few utensils such as castanets, a tambourine, and a few rattles and similar articles. These were put on one side of the room in a sort of cupboard, and the medium was tied up to a chair by the chief constable, assisted by the superintendent.

"The medium had a light jacket on, and he was roped up with all the skill which we could use. I did not myself help to rope him, but the chief constable and the superintendent did so. The lights were turned down in order to obtain the proper conditions, because ether transmits light, and is also the source of all psychic phenomena.

"We sang some hymns, and the whole proceedings were conducted in a religious spirit. After a little time the phenomena began. These articles, which had been placed far out of the medium's reach, came across the room. I was sitting next to the medium's

brother, and my wife was next to me, and presently things began falling about, such as small rattles.

"The lights were turned up, and the medium was found to be still sitting tightly roped to the chair. Then they were turned down again, and the phenomena became more noisy, and people were struck with the various objects which had been placed twenty to thirty feet from where the medium was sitting.

"The medium asked, 'Has everybody been touched?' and the reply was made that my wife had not. The medium asked: 'Is she cold?' She replied 'I am a little chilly,' and the medium retorted, 'Well, now you will be warm,' and my wife felt something fall into her lap.

"The lights were turned up, and, on examination, it was found that the medium's coat had been deposited on her knees. The medium himself, minus his coat, was still tightly bound to the chair. He was almost in a state of insensibility, and very exhausted."

"The tambourine," it was added, "was in the chief constable's lap, and a 'whatnot,' which had been moving through the air, on the floor in front of him. The chief said he had been touched several times, and once a hand grasped his hand and the lady's hand he was holding. (All in the room were holding hands.) The touch was like that of a human hand.

"The twenty persons in the room watched the whole proceedings very carefully to prevent any possibility of fraud."—!—!!—!!!

CHAPTER IX

*"Lay aside life-harming heaviness,
And entertain a cheerful disposition."*

—SHAKESPEARE (Richard II.).

THAT this book should contain one or two good old-fashioned ghost-stories is undeniable, and for those recorded in the following pages the writer asks no apology.

The first concerns a person of quality who had left his residence for a distant part on holiday, his steward with three servants remaining in charge of his mansion, goods, and plate. The parish priest was desired also to keep his eye on the property, as well as on the steward and the servants, and to succour them from the adjoining village if there was occasion, through burglars or anything else.

The steward, so the story goes, was fearful because, although he had no notice of any harm approaching, he had for three or four days successively strange impulses of dread and terror upon his mind that the mansion was to be broken into by a set of house-breakers, who would murder him with the other servants, rob the house, and finish up by setting fire to it. This idea was so riveted on his mind that he could think of nothing besides. Upon the third day he went to the priest and made his complaint, telling him of his apprehensions and fears.

The good priest told him that he did not lay a very great stress upon such things, but yet did not

think that they should be wholly slighted ; he also advised the steward to be upon his guard and to acquaint him with the earliest alarms. This advice not being altogether satisfying to the steward, it was agreed by the priest to reinforce the servants who were left in charge. Accordingly that night five stout, lusty fellows armed with shotguns and hand-grenades arrived according to the instructions of the priest, and stayed there until the morning, but there was—to use an up-to-date vernacular—nothing doing. The priest, not wishing to put the master of the house to any further expense by keeping a garrison in food and lodging, dismissed them, and told the steward to compose his mind and keep up a stout heart. “ Angels protect us ! ” cried the steward in dread, “ there is mischief about to take place ”—but the garrison went, all the same, and the priest bestowed a blessing, and the steward swore.

That very night a gang of thieves, who had intelligence that the nobleman, with his family, were away, and that the house was left with all the plate so lightly guarded, had formed a design to plunder it and afterwards to burn it, just as the steward had anticipated. They were two-and-twenty strong and thoroughly armed for mischief.

About midnight they attacked the house.

Getting in through a window, they placed themselves on guard to prevent any alarm being given from within.

The poor steward and his three servants were in great distress, for they were all upstairs and they could hear the doors below them being broken open. They barricaded themselves in their rooms and waited for the plundering to cease and the flames to appear which were to roast them alive ; but it seemed, however, that the good spirits invoked by the priest

for the protection of the house had really behaved with alacrity in undoing the fell intentions of the two-and-twenty.

The first of the fellows who had entered the house through the window opened the door to the others, leaving some outside to watch and to give any alarm which was necessary. Twelve, ranging over the great hall, found little there to gratify their greedy hopes, but breaking into a well-furnished parlour where the family usually sat, beheld seated in a great easy-chair a fat, grave, ancient-looking man with a long, full-bottomed black wig, a rich brocaded gown and a lawyer's laced band. Looking as though in great surprise, he seemed to be making signs to them for mercy. Not a word, however, did he speak, or they to him, except one bold fellow who cried: "What's this?"

Ignoring the old chap, the rogues immediately began to pull down the fine damask curtains and other rich things; then one said to another with an oath: "Make the old dog speak; make him tell us where the plate is hid. If he won't tell, cut his bulging throat."

The ancient gentleman, with signs of entreaty as if begging for his life, pointed to a door which, being opened, led into another parlour, which was the billiard-room, from which another door opened into a grand salon overlooking the gardens. They were some time forcing their way into this room, but when they had succeeded they were more than surprised to see sitting at the upper end of the room the same ancient gentleman in the same old get-up of a dress, making the same idiotic gestures and silent entreaties, as though he were posing for a cinematograph artist or describing to his friends the wonders of his allotment under the Prothero scheme.

The rogues were not much concerned at first, but thought he had come in by another door, and began to abuse him for giving them the trouble of breaking open a door when he could have opened it for them quite easily, or could have bade them enter another way.

Upon this, another bold robber threatened to knock his fat head off if he did not tell them where the money and plate were.

The old man then pointed to another door leading to the grand salon.

These doors being frail they were soon through them, and to their surprise and mortification, upon a dais at the end of the salon, seated in another big chair, was the same old man in the wig and gown.

Upon seeing him, the foremost of the rogues fell back, declaring him to be of the devil.

The whole escapade was now becoming one of bewilderment. When they came out of the first parlour into the billiard-room, being eager for the plate and the money, and being so absorbed in their task, only some of them rushed out into the salon at the beckoning of the old gentleman. Then they *were* alarmed, for while some of them called out from the salon that the old man was before them again, others answering from the billiard-room shouted to know how the deuce that could be, for he was *in there as well*, still in his chair, all dressed up. Then, rushing into the first parlour, there sat the same old boy gesticulating and misbehaving himself like a windmill in a fit. Not guessing what the occasion should be or what it all meant, they were under the impression that the old men they had seen were in fact three separate men dressed in a kind of uniform to mock them and to let them think the servants and the steward were not afraid. "Well," says one of the gang, "I'll finish off

one of the old rascals. I'll teach him to make game of us," and lifting his gun, struck with all his force at the ancient man—as he thought—but behold, there was nothing in the chair, and the gun, striking the furniture, rebounded like a boomerang on his own head and laid him senseless.

At the same time a thief in the salon made a rush at the old man who sat *there*, but when he got to the chair it was empty.

This happening in the two rooms, they were confounded, and cried out: "Let's go to the front parlour and see if the old fossil is still there."

They went, and there sat the same old man in the same old way.

Upon this they fell into worse confusion than ever, for here was what they took to be the real old man, the others being only ghosts. Upon this they all ran thither, and one of them said: "Let me come. I'll speak to him, for I have spoken to the devil before now and am not afraid." Another, getting his courage up, said: "Let it be the devil or the devil's grandmother, I'll parley with it, for I want to know what it is," and so saying, he ran up to the ancient man in the chair, fell on his knees before it, crossed himself, and in the names of as many saints as he could remember cried out: "What art thou?" but the figure never moved nor spoke. Then the old man's pitiful look which seemed to beg for mercy changed into one of horror, and instead of the hands which had been held up in "Kamerad" fashion, there were two large fiery daggers, not flaming, but red hot, and pointed with a livid bluish flame.

The steward and the three servants were all this time above stairs, in the utmost concern at the danger they were in, expecting every moment to hear the thieves breaking through the staircase doors to get

at them and take their lives. They heard the confused noise that the fellows made below, but could not imagine what it was all about, but while it lasted it came into the mind of one of the servants that all the rogues were in the parlour together, and very busy there, and he conceived the brilliant idea of going on to the roof with one of his hand-grenades and dropping it down the chimney which led up from the room below where the confused noises came from.

The steward approved of the design, but with this addition, for he was no man of half-measures. "Go," said he, "not with one grenade but with three, and drop them down the chimney shoots leading to the three rooms one after another at short intervals."

So up to the roof they went ; one grenade was put into the shoot and down it rushed, roaring with a terrible noise. It came down into the parlour where the rogues were gathered and exploded amongst them before they had time to run into the next room.

Terribly frightened, they divided their forces between the salon and the billiard-room, and just as they were recovering from their fright they heard the devil, as they verily believed, coming down the chimney after them. The noise of the bursting of shells was so sudden and so unexpected that the mischief done among the thieves was terrible. One man was killed outright, another had his legs blown off, and another was so desperately wounded that when the people came in to render first-aid he shot himself through the head with his own pistol. The others, who were more frightened than hurt, ran to the door, helping the wounded along as best they could.

Just then, however, as they were making off, with the wounded dropping by the way like ripe fruit (we

must be prosy), they heard a hullabaloo in the distance, and looking in the direction from which the noise came, they observed the village priest led by the ghost of the ancient old man, who was last seen in the big armchair amid the smoke and soot of exploding bombs, and followed by the whole populace of the village, so that he resembled the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The remnant of the gang, upon seeing their game to be up, were of a mind to run away, but alas ! they were reckoning without their host, for immediately upon their commencing to run, the ghost, uttering a terrifying shriek, made a tremendous spring, and before they could realise what was happening they were all dead men.

Ah ! my reader, you may think this a foolish story, and, for aught I know, it is, but is it not just the sort of stuff which is given as evidence in favour of the existence of ghosts in modern ghost-books ?

* * * * *

The notion of spirits or ghosts appearing to discover where money or treasure has been buried, or hid and forgotten, is another of those old ideas which so universally prevail that it is almost impossible to drive it out of memory's storehouse. If folk should see anything in white which they could call a ghost, they would watch it from a distance in the hope of hearing it give a stamp on the ground with its foot, to denote where treasure was hid, and if it vanished after stamping in a chanticleering manner they would return to the spot in the morning in hopes of finding a purse of money or something in the jewellery line. Indeed, it has been known for some people, after seeing a ghost *stamp* on the ground, to return to the spot when nobody was about and commence

K

digging, expecting to unearth an ancient urn or considerable treasure, or if the ghost was seen on the top of a barn they would pull the barn down and depart disappointed if they did not make a discovery.

That the ignorant and superstitious may be imposed upon there is no gainsaying, and one or two burlesqued and interesting little stories illustrating this will not perhaps be amiss as the closing scenes in this book of "trivial fond records" concerning THE GHOST WORLD.

* * * * *

A country gentleman had an old-built house, which was the remains of a demolished monastery. Wishing to build a new house, he resolved to have it pulled down, but the cost for this was far more than he cared to pay, so he thought of a stratagem whereby he could get it done more cheaply. He published it broadcast by idle talk that the old house was haunted, and so artfully did he do it that the whole thing was believed in a very short time.

By bribery he made a stranger whom he brought into the town dress up in a white nightgown and pass swiftly across the tennis-court near the house at a time of evening when all cats appear to be grey. That the apparition might not pass by unnoticed—as ships that pass in the night—the man who owned the house was careful to engage in conversation near the window his friends upon whom his hopes also rested for *seeing* the vision and helping to spread the report.

They soon gave notice to the whole household of what they had seen.

Then the mistress, the family, and all the servants gazed out of windows or peeped out of half-opened doors, and there, sure enough, crossing the courtyard

and dressed in white was the apparition. When it reached the further end of the courtyard it entered through a closed door into an old building or out-house. Soon afterwards, smoke was seen to be coming through the windows, and upon inspection by the more bold folk of the household there exuded, as if to prove the presence of a ghost, what they described as a strong smell of sulphur, but which was, in reality, the smell of burnt gunpowder (it was this that had caused the smoke).

As was to be expected, the trick began to work. Fanciful people hearing of it were invited to the house on certain evenings. If they kept the appointment, the ghost never failed them. It would glide along a path under the trees with a kind of double-shuffle of both feet at once, then, coming up to the old house, it would stamp the ground and scrape with its foot like a chicken hunting for hidden corn. Upon observing this, the knowing ones declared it to be a sign of hidden wealth which should be dug for.

The owner of the house, however, assumed an air of remarkable indifference, making out that, whether money was hidden there or not, "it didn't really matter." His friends would be continually entreating him to commence digging; and the more he refused, the more assiduous to duty became the ghost. Its walkings became more frequent and its stampings went nineteen to the dozen as it showed an impatience for their lassitude.

At length, some of the people in the adjoining village, finding the gentleman who owned the house so neglectful of the gipsy's—I mean the ghost's—warning, went to him asking for permission to do the digging, and incidentally confiding to his servants that if the owner gave them permission to dig they would dig until they found what they were after,

even if it meant digging up the foundations of the building. The owner, hearing of their desperate intentions, replied that it was not fair for them to pull his house down and have all they found in the bargain as *he knew the treasure was immense* (the artful old rascal !), but if they were willing to share with him what they found, and if they would also agree to carry away the rubbish of the fallen house after they had stacked up all the good bricks and timber, they could "carry on."

The agreement being mutually understood, and verbally agreed upon, the villagers set to work with a real good will.

Talk about suburban allotment-holders in the year of war, nineteen hundred and eighteen ! They were nowhere in it.

With pick and shovel these treasure-hunters dug, and delved, and mined, like human ants, and why not ? Hadn't their appetites been whetted by discoveries of money which—tell it not in Gath—had been secretly placed there by the owner *when it was dark*, and hadn't they dug up this money, as our allotment brigade have been supposed to have dug up old five-shilling pieces and gold watches—by way of encouragement ?

When the treasure-hunters' progress downwards was arrested by coming to water, and finally given up for fear of coming to flames, they commenced to pull the house down.

The first thing they intended to take down was a chimney-stack, and as luck would have it, it proved to be a veritable bank of hope when they started on it. First, one silver coin was found, then another, and then another. The owner being near by was called and offered half the money, but he replied "Nay, nay ! not this time, but you will find some more,

and we can halve that ! ” So away they worked as if their lives depended upon it, and as they were frequently encouraged by finds of a like nature it was not long before the whole building was razed to the ground, and the owner, with the aid of the “ghost,” had got done for a few shillings an amount of labour which in the ordinary way would have cost him a good many pounds.

* * * *

Whilst ruminating in my leisure on the foregoing story and its absurdities, memory suggests that there are probably still a good many folk who *do* believe in ghostly spirits taking the trouble to walk about on cold nights in flimsy nighties, and so, with the reader’s permission, I will close the book with a story which I hope will be to their liking.

The account concerns a pedlar of Suffolk who used to travel the country with his pack. In Sudbury he is said to have had a warehouse in which he stored his surplus stock.

It happens that this man, having been travelling about the country, found himself late one night, with his pack, resting on a stile somewhere near the outskirts of the town. As he rested there with his load, getting up steam for the last long mile which would take him home, there came up to him a ghost, in the appearance of a woman dressed in white. By the light of the moon the pedlar could see that she was of pleasant countenance, and this took off somewhat any fear which he might have had if her features had been otherwise. The ghost seemed to be walking absent-mindedly, and when it came to the stile and observed the pilgrim with his load it stepped backward, and without uttering a syllable, gave him “the glad eye,” or rather made signs to

him in a beckoning way that he was to follow her.

The pedlar, thinking discretion to be the better part of valour, and smothering the conscience which told him of comforts at home, obeyed the ghost, leaving his pack behind him.

This ghost, *unlike* any ordinary lady seeing a friend home, persisted, so the story goes, in walking backwards over three fields and two stiles with its eyes upon the pedlar all the time, and with a continual beckoning of the head which was augmented every now and again by the index finger of the right hand. Presently they came to a particular spot near a churchyard where there was a great stone. There the ghost stopped, and, giving a sharp stamp with its foot—vanished!

The pedlar, having a knowledge of omens, is quick to take the hint, marks the stone, and like the ploughman, “homeward plods his weary way.”

The next night he commences to dig near the stone where the ghost stamped, and before he had dug very far his spade strikes something hard, which he discovers to be an old chest.

With great labour he removes its lid, as the whole thing was too big to carry away, and finds that it is full of silver money.

He fills his pockets with as much as they will hold, replaces the lid, covers the box with earth, goes home, and keeps his own counsel concerning it.

By paying these nightly visits to his newly-found Tom Tiddler’s ground he soon got all the money safe home, and after that the chest itself.

What the particular sum was that he found varies considerably, but the story goes that he was soon able to set up in the town as a shopkeeper.

It happened about this time that the parish church

being old and out of repair, the parishioners by voluntary act decided among themselves to restore it, and in order to furnish the needful sums of money for this purpose it was proposed to make a collection from among the inhabitants of the town. One day the minister came to the pedlar's shop, and being invited to "come in and sit down," took from out his pocket a scroll on which was inscribed the names of the generous people who had subscribed to the repairing fund, but when the pedlar saw that Sir Thomas Bigacres had given five pounds, another gentleman five, and another ten, his heart swelled within him, for he had a desire not only to "go and do likewise," but to top them all ; so, calling for pen and ink, like Old King Cole calling for his drink and his fiddlers three, he writes down his name as a subscriber of twenty-five pounds—thanks to the ghost.

Some months after this, having occasion to repair his shop-door, he could find nothing suitable except a piece of the old chest which he had dug up, so he made use of it. Then it happened that the pedlar, with a feeling of "something attempted, something done," for it was a summer's evening, was, like old Caspar, "sitting in the sun" by the side of his mended door, when an old gentleman who lived in the town, and who was reputed to be a great scholar, came strolling by.

"Good evening, Mr. Pedlar," he says, and while he is talking his eye lights upon the door-patch and he falls to examining it, for he was an antiquarian and folklorist, and knew the meaning of much ceremonial and strange letterings.

"Well!" says the pedlar, "what hast thou discovered?"

"Truly, neighbour," replies the antiquarian, "what I observe is very remarkable."

“What’s that ? ” says the pedlar.

“Oh,” replies the gentleman, stooping down like poor old Pickwick making a discovery, “to be sure, it is some old Saxon English in the ancient Gothic characters, and it says—

“Where this once stood
Stands another twice as good.”

“Hum ! ” grunts the pedlar, “that’s old stuff indeed. What can it mean ? ”

“Nay,” says the old gentleman, “that I don’t know, for who can tell where it came from or where it stood ? ”

“Ay, ay,” returns the pedlar, laughing up his sleeve, “who indeed would know where it stood, and if they did what can there be in that ? ”

After a little more chat of that kind the pedlar rid himself of the old antiquarian as soon as he could and fell into a brown study concerning the inscription :

“Where this once stood
Stands another twice as good.”

Although it was six or seven years at least since the pedlar rested on the stile and was shown the lucky resting-place of the money-chest by the ghost, he had not forgotten the neighbourhood where it stood or where he had dug it up, so off he goes indoors to tell his good wife Jane. She, good woman, believing procrastination to be a thief, riles her spouse for wasting his time speaking to her about it, and, wondering whether the ghost is still likely to visit the spot, persuades him to go at once, although it has now got dark, to try and find the other chest “twice as good.” So with pick and spade he departs for the place he remembers, but on arriving there he cannot distinguish the exact spot, as the grass and

weeds have grown over where he had dug the hole, so he goes back home.

“Well!” says she, after giving him a scolding, “you just return now that the moon is up and I’ll warrant the ghost that showed you the thing before will show you the thing again.”

So he returns, and sure enough, there, wandering like a lost soul in one of Dante’s circles, was the ghost of his former visit. In the same dumb fashion as previously it pointed to a particular spot of earth, and then vanished.

In short time the pedlar set to work, and digging like Dickens’s Daniel Grubb, it was not long before he struck the chest he was in search of. It was bound about with iron, and although not so big as the other *it was* better, because it was full of gold, whereas the other was full of silver.

With the help of his wife the pedlar carried the money home, and although the reputed amount of the treasure varies considerably, so that it would be worse than misleading to state a figure, there can be no doubt, if tradition is to be believed, that the sum was a very substantial one—and especially so if we may believe the happy sequel to the discovery; which is as follows:

It seems that all this time the repair of the church went on but slowly, for according to the old saying, *it was church work*: and a vestry being called upon some other church work, the pedlar, who was present among the rest of his neighbours, took occasion to complain that he thought the business was not honestly managed and that it was indeed church work carried on heavily.

Some of his neighbours, however, taking umbrage at his remarks, told him that he took too much upon himself, that it was no affair of his, that he was not in

trust for the work, and that they to whom the business of restoring was committed knew *their* business, and that he, being a pedlar, could mind *his own* business and his shop at the same time.

He answered that it was true he was not trusted with the work, for if he had been it would have been finished before now and that he had a right to complain because he paid as well as other people, and added that if they did not get-a-move-on he would complain to the Bishop.

At this, his neighbours told him that the work was lagging because of their need of money, and that they were looking out for some kind soul who had got plenty and to spare, whereupon he asked them how much they required, and they told him the cost would be quite two hundred pounds, for the roof had to come off and be put on again, and the windows wanted taking out and putting back again, as well as many other items which come into the category known as "restoration."

He advised them to call a committee and he would put them into a way of getting all the money they needed.

The committee was formed, the pedlar was co-opted, and he promised, to the surprise of the whole assembly, to pay whatever was necessary to get the work finished.

Accordingly he took the whole work in hand himself. He laid out about a thousand pounds in "restoring" the old church out of existence. Almost a new church was built in its place, and in memory of the occasion the stained-glass window, so it is said, has representations upon it of the pedlar and his pack, with the ghost beckoning him on to the place where he dug up the money!

This stained-glass window *may*, or *may not*, have

been placed in position to commemorate the old pedlar and the ghost ; but I *have* heard that it has nothing to do with them whatsoever, as it is just a familiar representation of the first Easter morn, with the two sorrowing sisters meeting with the angel at the sepulchre.

* * * * *

However, be that as it may, we must admit that after all the available evidence has been examined, that of all the mysteries associated with the dim shadowland of legend, romance, and superstition, none are more interesting or fraught with greater probabilities than that connected with ghosts and apparitions. In all ages and among all peoples a belief in them has not failed to form part of the universal mental make-up.

An endeavour to eradicate or disprove such beliefs where they have become so deep-rooted would be a gigantic task, and if it succeeded it would be a thankless one, for it would rob quite a number of kindly disposed and ever benevolent people of a fancy which harms no one except themselves, and of a fancy which they love to include amongst other cherished possessions of the mind.

The ghost problem is a ghost problem, and to understand beyond the smallest degree, the application of a considerable amount of time, thought, and reasoning is called for. Not only must the inquirer be acquainted with what has been called "the jargon of the ghost-story-book," which has played, and is still playing, such a tremendous part in propagating from generation to generation the ideas of the past ; but he must also have more than a passing acquaintance with those many peculiar customs of the ages through which the same ideas have percolated and from which they have been handed down.

The philosophies of those bygone days, the religions of the people, their mythologies, superstitions, beliefs, folklore, art, and literature must one and all be taken into account for consideration; together with which must be tempered a knowledge of the human mental machine and of the problems of human conduct. Add to these the power of discrimination gained by the possession of that mysterious *sense* known as the "*psychic*," and then the inquirer delving into the regions of the unknown will be fairly well equipped for the task; but even so, the equipment will be far from complete, as anyone even possessing these rare qualifications will readily admit if they care to be candid with themselves as well as with others.

Therefore, after all that has been written, and after all that has been said, concerning ghostly phenomena, it must be confessed that *apart* from the many well-founded instances recorded which go to show them as being mere *creations of the mind which sees them*, there is little *known* evidence available, either for their acceptable explanation or final solution. If it were otherwise there would not, at the present time, be such a confusion of thought on the subject emanating from spiritualistic and learned societies professing to be in possession of exclusive and informative knowledge on the subject—*vide* the "séance" recently held in Cardiff, and at which articles of clothing and of furniture vied with each other, at the word of command from the spooky controller, in misbehaving themselves in the dark like members of a disorderly nigger troupe.

Until more tangible theory and reliable evidence than that which we now have is forthcoming we can only hazard the idea that ghosts—*real* ghosts, if there be such things—might be accounted for by the operation of some agent or agents of which at present

very little is actually *known*. Whether these may be likened as being somewhat analogous to those varying phases of human intelligence which might or might not be described as existing on a higher plane than that on which the normal mind is in the habit of acting and playing its part, may be mere conjecture, but at the same time it may be a very laudable proposition. Grant this, and it would lend weight, even if it did not prove the hypothesis that a *genuine ghost-seer* is, after all, not a mere dreamer, but a kind of super-man or super-woman possessed of a rare intelligence; so untrammelled and unsullied by sordid qualities as to display a peculiar but legitimate psychic sense enabling it to *see* and *observe* many strange phenomena—phenomena to which the average bodily eye is all but blind.

* * * * *

With the writing of the paragraph which immediately precedes this, the book, in so far as it concerns ghosts, apparitions, and spooks, and which might very well have been extended *ad infinitum*, is finished. Throughout its pages the writer has been mindful of the old Persian poet's dictum that—

“Here is the door to which there is no key,
Here is the veil through which we cannot see,”

but has, nevertheless, endeavoured to record, in an acceptable if unusual manner, a selection of stories connected with the escapades of those ghosts which have strutted across the stage of Time and played their mystifying part. When some of these same ghosts are stripped of their dull trappings and their legendary apparel, it is astonishing how transparent they become to anyone having half an eye to see through them.

Just as the ghosts of darkness become indistinct with the breaking in of the day, and finally disappear altogether in the brightness and glory of the morning sun, so the habiliments of the traditional ghost fall away and become invisible—along with the ghost—when reviewed by a mind correctly focussed.

Nevertheless, as reasonable as the argument here put forth may appear to some, it is only to be expected that it will be scoffed at by others, and when one considers with what vehement resentment ideas a little antagonistic to those designated as “popular” are usually met, it would be strange if it were otherwise.

Be this as it may, the writer desires to extend his sympathy to the long-suffering and patient reader, and to express his sentiments—regarding the captious critic—by saying as Omar Khayyam said—

“The moving finger writes,
And having writ moves on :
Nor all thy piety nor wit
Shall lure it back
To cancel half a line.”

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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